21

MAY 1988

A SOVIET WEEKLY OF WORLD AFFAIRS

NEW TIMES

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Children in a city

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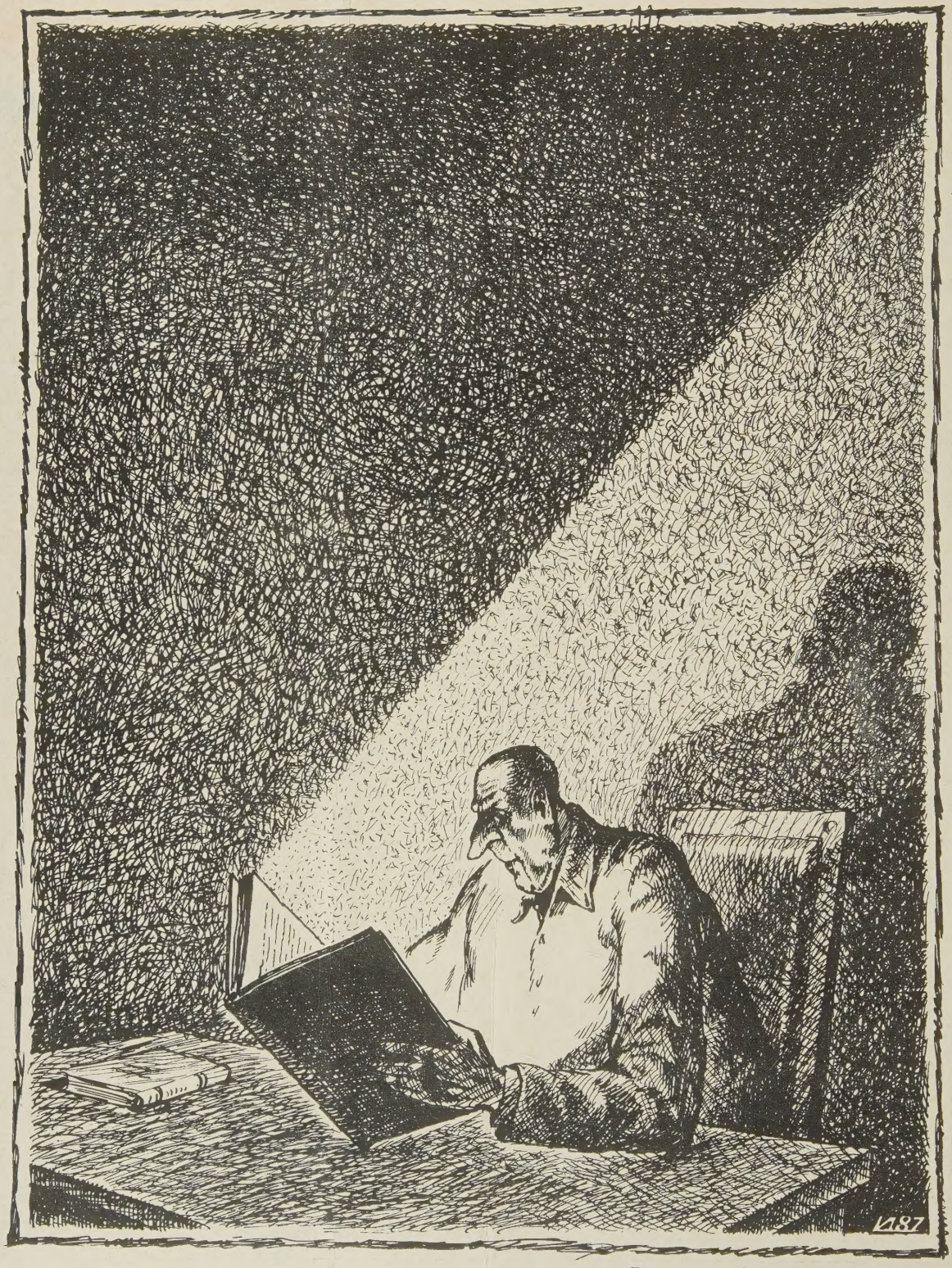
Interview with Karoly Grosz



Drawing by Igor Smirnov

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AFGHANISTAN

THE SOVIET TROOP PULLOUT BEGINS!

Report by our special correspondent from Kabul. Reflections by the writer Albertas Laurinciukas.

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MOON JAM: THAT WAS OUR PROTEST

Cover: the Frogner-Park ensemble in Oslo (a fragment). The sculptor ADOLF GUSTAV VIGELAND (1869 – 1943)

Photo by Vasily Tereshchenko

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Igor Mikhailusenko,
poet,
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ I recently visited the United States as a guest of my American friends, the peace supporters. I read my poetry in colleges and universities and spoke about perestroika and glasnost. I was given a warm welcome. Ordinary Americans gave me flowers, while eminent statesmen, to whom while still in Moscow I had sent a peace letter, spoke to me frankly of their views.

My old friend Senator Edward Kennedy, with whom I keep up a correspondence, met me on Capitol Hill when the Senate was in session, and has written to me at my Moscow address. He expressed the view that the United States and the Soviet Union could and should overcome their differences. They must get rid of the fetters of ideological fear and hatred and realize that permanent hostility is not constructive for either side. Senator Kennedy expressed the hope that today's shoots of good will and improved relations between our two countries would continue to grow, adding that no choice remains in the face of the horrendous force of nuclear weapons that could destroy the whole world.

Michael Dukakis, governor of Massachusetts, who is contending for the Democratic Presidential nomination wrote that he found my plan for strengthening peace between the superpowers attractive. And he agreed that cultural exchanges between the two countries could promote peace by deepening mutual understanding.

I hope that the meeting between General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan will still further strengthen the ties between our peoples.

Reinhard Künnemann,
Ahlen, F.R.G.

■ At the end of last year the secondary school in the town of Ahlen (North Rhine-Westphalia), where I teach history held a Russian-language Olympiad. It was then that my pupils and I had the idea of collecting and exhibiting documents describing the fate of Soviet people brought to our town in Germany during the Second World War to do forced labour...We carried out our plans. Then we had another idea: to write to the addresses given in the files in the hope that someone would reply. We drafted the text of the letter, then slated it into Russian and sent it out to 700 addresses. Even the Burgomaster of the town joined us in our work and it was he who paid the postal expenses.

We are now looking forward to getting replies from the Soviet Union, although we realize that we can hardly hope for complete success. Many of those whom we have written are no more, others have moved, and there may be some who won't want to reply. We can understand and find an explanation for that – it is very hard, at times even impossible, to recall those terrible times.

We would like you to publish our letter in your magazine. We will be grateful to all who help us fill in a page from the history of Ahlen, horrible though it may be.

Jörg Jedeck,
Bitterfeld, G.D.R.

■ In recent years the socialist countries, and even some capitalist ones, have abandoned outmoded ways of thought in foreign policy. The times require a quick reaction to changes in the balance of forces in the world. Flexibility is not a mere catch word; it is a necessity. Today, when so many weapons have been stockpiled, it would be wrong to stick to the old methods.

The INF treaty was the result of a long dialogue. It can justly be described as the prologue to nuclear disarmament. But we can't stop at that. We have to advance further, towards, for instance, a 50-per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons and doing something about chemical weapons, and then conventional armaments. As I see it, that road is not a well-paved highway, but a narrow mountain path.

What represents the greatest danger to the continued process of disarmament are the plans of certain NATO circles, which, while seeming ready to disarm, declare for rearmament, as Manfred Wörner does.

Who else belongs to these circles? What are their aims? That, in my view, is a subject your magazine could examine. There is also another subject I should like to suggest. My attention was drawn by the trial at the end of last year of hooligans who disrupted public order and threatened people's lives. They shouted fascist slogans, although in my country this is illegal. Unfortunately, many youngsters are easily influenced by the ideology of the brownshirts. And that being the case, I would say that the soil still exists on which fascism could thrive again. We would be to blame if we allowed the revival of fascism and war. I believe that today we must do everything we can to prevent it.

Anatoly Polishchuk,
Khabarovsk Territory,
U.S.S.R.

■ I am just an ordinary forestry worker, as one poacher correctly observed. To the best of my ability I wage a constant war against those who violate the laws on the protection of the environment. But sometimes I am appalled

by the futility of my efforts. Because in a single moment all around could perish – not only the taiga with its unique fauna, the Amur River and lesser known rivers and streams, which I have been protecting for eleven years, but all living things on Earth could perish, human beings first of all. It is then that I want to shout to the whole world: Homo sapiens, stop! You have been given the ability to reason. That is why I have drawn such a picture. I would very much like those on whom disarmament depends to glance at it and realize that the nuclear umbrella must be emptied as quickly as possible. Time waits for no man!

GLASNOST

Readers speak up

I. Chernobrovin,
Belaya Tserkov, U.S.S.R.

■ The Soviet press has recently been systematically denigrating a whole period in our history. If one is to believe certain authors, in the thirties and forties we had no building of socialism, no state power, only a dictatorial terrorist regime headed by Stalin – and that applied to all spheres – politics, the economy, science, literature and the arts. All these denigrators have one thing in common – their extremely one-sided, biased description of events and phenomena. They forget or deliberately ignore the extremely complex and difficult internal and external situation at the time. For instance, they carefully enumerate all the Soviet people who suffered in the purges, but forget to mention how many real enemies the Soviet state had, how many Soviet party and non-party activists were killed, how many mines, factories and warehouses were either blown up or set fire to. None of them says a word about the agents foreign intelligence services sent to our country or recruited from among our people to turn them into spies or subversive agents. The first days of the Great Patriotic War showed how many there were. And we had to fight these numerous enemies.

Yes, gross violations of socialist legality did take place. But why confine the blame to Stalin? Apart from him, there was the party CC and we had an immense apparatus of officials and law-enforcement bodies at district, regional and republican levels, who were then and are to this day responsible for deciding people's fates on the spot.

Another thing. Many economists claim that the abandonment of the NEP and the forced rate of industrialization and collectivization of the country were grave errors on Stalin's part. But it is clear even now that without them it would have been extremely hard to build up a defence industry, and in the first year of the war redislocate it in the eastern regions of the country. Without that we could have hardly won the war against fascism.

One should view the lessons of history seriously and objectively, not smear all and everything that happened under leaders of the country who are no longer alive.

Grigory Ageyev,
Lipetsk region

■ Both in our country and abroad, there are people who seek to find a "historical" justification for the repressions of the thirties, for the lawlessness of those times.

Yes, the capitalist encirclement, the extremely complex international situation (in the pre-war years) couldn't have failed to leave their imprint on the life of our society in those times. But can that serve as a justification for the unjustified repressions which continued after the war as well? They were only possible because Stalin and his closest colleagues went back on Lenin's basic principles of socialism.

Silvio Sarzi-Sartori from Italy (No. 15/88) writes that our delving into history has caused unnecessary pain and confusion to those who believed blindly in our country. But doesn't the fact that truth and justice have triumphed in our society give the working people, people of good will the world over, the opportunity to have conscious trust in us and see the advantages of socialist democracy and our system?

It is said that old wounds are best left untouched. It is enough to learn the lessons of the past and not make the same mistakes again. No! Our greatest social wound, our troubles must be healed completely.

Yevgenia Suvorina,
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ A short while ago I watched the Leningrad TV channel programme "Public Opinion," which discussed proposals for the forthcoming party conference. The question of a multi-party system cropped up and it was claimed that a one-party system in itself presupposes the absence of democracy. Some speakers pointed to the experience of the Western countries, where there are not one or two parties, but a number of very different ones. Well, pluralism is a good thing. But why should different views and even stands have to mean different parties as well?

Yes, unfortunately, until quite recently party members could not even think of expressing any view differing from the official line without immediately being branded as factionalists and then enemies of the people. But now times have changed. Today learning to live in conditions of democratization means also learning how to conduct discussions. In my opinion, this should and could be done when drafting decisions by members of the country's only party, the Communist Party.

AN ARTIST'S COMMENT

Drawing by Leonid Tishkov

PRIVATE OPINION

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

EDWARD KENNEDY, U.S. Senator

The withdrawal of Soviet troops under the terms of the Geneva Accords has begun. It brings the first glimmer of peace for the people of Afghanistan in nearly nine years.

There is the prospect that these years of suffering and conflict may finally be drawing to a close. But many obstacles and challenges remain to be met and overcome before peace will return to Afghanistan. The Geneva Accords, this historic document, establishes a framework that will allow the people of Afghanistan the chance to work for peace, stability and self-determination. This agreement will not end the fighting, but it will surely hasten the day when millions of Afghan refugees will be able to return to their homes and land.

The tasks that remain are great. Serious political and humanitarian issues have still to be resolved, requiring continued determination and generosity. Good will alone will not be enough.

At this crucial stage, we and the others involved in the peace process must be vigilant against those who would undermine the Geneva Accords or otherwise continue the conflict.

HANS-JOCHEN VOGEL, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany

We welcome the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. We believe that this will set right the mistakes made many years ago. This is a constructive approach. But we also know that the Afghan problem will not thereby be exhausted.

All those concerned, together with the rest of the world, should not turn their backs on resolving it. Aid to Afghanistan is essential. Both in the Federal German Bundestag and in open discussions on this problem, we are considering what economic aid the Federal Republic of Germany will be able to give the Afghan people in restoring their economy.

The settlement of the situation around Afghanistan is an example of how the knots of regional conflicts can be untied. And there are plenty of them in the world, each awaiting its solution.

VASOS LYSSARIDES, President of the House of Representatives of the Cyprus Republic

The agreement on Afghanistan signed in Geneva should encourage other countries as well to withdraw their troops from foreign territories. The principle of non-interference is the key to resolving any regional problem, including the problems of the Eastern Mediterranean. Obviously all the people of Cyprus, irrespective of which ethnic group they belong to, are interested in a political settlement on the island. But the situation won't change for the better until Turkey withdraws its troops and settlers from the territory of Cyprus, and respects its sovereignty, the territorial integrity of the republic, the policy of non-alignment pursued by Cyprus, and the rights and freedoms of Cypriots. A just settlement of the Cyprus question is possible only within the framework of the United Nations, on the basis of the General Assembly's resolutions and the generally recognized norms of international law. Until it is settled, other problems of the region cannot be resolved, such as the differences between Greece and Turkey – a start to which was made after the recent meetings between the Prime Ministers of the two countries.

KONSTANTIN VANSHENKIN, poet, U.S.S.R.

The withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan. Many waited a long time for this. Many, from the moment they were brought into that country.

That war dragged on for twice as long as our great war. As a young man then I served in Army as a paratrooper, and my heart bled most for my counterparts today. There was plenty of reason. In the absence of glasnost we pretended that nothing special was happening, and that produced its results.

During the Patriotic War the people were concerned for every soldier, they cared for them, and when possible fed them. Especially the wounded. Today's soldiers in Afghanistan feel the polite indifference sharply. No matter how you look at it, that is the case. Only in the very last few years, mention began to be made of the casualties, the wounded, the suffering, a mother's – and more rarely – a young girl's grief and love.

In 1982 I wrote these verses:

From Kabul Aunt Zina's son
Came at last – sealed in a coffin.
Having put her highboots on
She walked out, hoarsely coughing.
Someone else's was the bullet
In a land to her unknown,
Someone else brought in the body,
But the boy... He was her own.

I support the idea of putting up a monument to those who died in Afghanistan. I am happy for those who are returning.

Returning home

Soviet troops began their withdrawal from Afghanistan on May 15. New Times special correspondent LEV YELIN reports from Kabul.

In the first three months Soviet soldiers will leave 11 garrisons (18 are stationed there), and withdraw from 9 provinces of the country (there was a Soviet presence in 14 provinces on May 15).

"A timetable has been drawn up and will be kept to implicitly," the commander of the limited contingent of Soviet forces announced at a press conference in Kabul. Forty four-year-old General Boris Gromov from the city of Saratov on the Volga has commanded the contingent for about three years. He has been decorated with the Gold Star of Hero of the Soviet Union.

In replying to a question he underlined that the withdrawal of the troops was not a retreat, but the completion of an internationalist mission, on the one hand, and on the other, compliance with the Geneva Accords.

The opponents of national reconciliation make no secret of the fact that they are planning their own "farewell" to Soviet troops, and a bloody celebration for many Afghans. The Islamic holiday of Ramazan is now coming to an end in Afghanistan. On that last Friday of Ramazan, May 13th, the mosques in Kabul had a specially festive look. Tens of thousands of people gathered for namaz at the mosques. I mingled with the crowds on the square outside one of Kabul's oldest mosques, Poliheshti. Suddenly the noisy crowd broke up, as a funeral procession approached the mosque. Several battered military vehicles with cracks in their windscreens drew up. It was the funeral of an Afghan officer killed by the rebels.

That Friday evening, standing on the balcony of my hotel, I heard the unmistakable whizz of jet shell (JS). Then the sound was repeated. Both shells fell in residential districts of Kabul, leaving a trail of casualties behind them. The next morning I was woken by an explosion at 5.40. Later I learned that a lorry packed with dynamite had exploded at the bus stop in the Pul-i-Mahmud Khan area. Ten people were killed, and 13 injured, among them women and two children... When I arrived on the spot I saw gaping holes left by the explosion in the walls of two buildings.

The next day, May 14th, when President Najibullah was holding his press conference, five jet shells were fired on Kabul. The Kabul Times reported that in two districts of the capital nine rockets ready for launching had been found, plus another 15 in Nangarhar province. The news agency France Presse reported that counterrevolutionaries were dispatching fresh batches of Stinger and Milan anti-aircraft rockets, artillery and rocket launchers to fire on Kabul.

Maximum security precautions were taken in Kabul, and patrols stepped up.

A group of Soviet and foreign journalists visited a signal unit on the outskirts of Kabul that would be the last to leave Afghanistan. Its mission was to maintain communications right up to the last day. There were empty spaces in the parking lot: many army vehicles were away escorting the withdrawing troops.

"They fired from that village and that one too," the deputy commander of the unit, 39-year-old Lt. Colonel Vyacheslav Korolev told us.

Korolev also pointed to a black strip on a neighbouring hillside – it had been left by a missile fired at the unit.

"We are preparing our soldiers to expect the months ahead to be very hard ones. The situation is difficult. And crossing the Salang in the winter will not

be easy. But the signals units invariably find themselves in the hottest spots..."

Late in the evening of May 14 several of us journalists flew to Jalalabad to the unit that was to be first to leave Afghanistan. At the Spinzar Hotel in the town, local community elders agreed to answer our questions.

In the corridors of the hotel I noticed the blue berets of the members of the U.N. inspection group. Lars Kerlstrup of Denmark explained that two groups of 25 members each had started work in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Afghan group included, apart from himself, representatives from Canada, Nepal, Ghana, Finland, Austria, and Fiji. ...The leader of the group was a Swede, Colonel Bu Pellnäs. I found him.

"What is your job on May 15?"

"To observe how the Soviet side is implementing the Geneva agreements. Specifically, to see how it is withdrawing its soldiers from Jalalabad."

The key issue in a settlement of the situation around Afghanistan remains the discontinuation of outside interference in the internal affairs of the Afghan people.

From the joint Soviet-Afghan statement of May 15.

"And probably to watch how the column reaches Kabul? To see if there are any attacks by armed units?"

"That is a question I would rather address to the Soviet command..."

"A couple of days ago, one of the leaders of the armed opposition declared..."

"I will not reply to that question..."

"But it concerns you personally... He said that since the Peshawar Seven had sworn to fight against the Geneva agreements, he would regard the U.N. observers as enemies..."

"I would prefer not to comment."

The press conference of community elders began with a big explosion a mere 100-150 metres from the hotel.

"Jet shells like that," said the chairman of the provincial National Front, Kouat Khan, "are supplied to the bandits by the United States and other Western countries. Our children, women and old people are killed by them. If Pakistan were to block the road to the bandits in keeping with the Geneva agreement, and the United States were to stop arming them, there would be no more explosions."

Soviet and Afghan soldiers say goodbye.

"Gulbuddin Hikmatyar promised to arrive in Jalalabad as soon as the Russians leave. Who will defend the city: the Afghan army alone or the entire population?"

Not everyone was prepared to answer this question. Finally, the elder Kohala Abed rose.

"The Afghan army," he said, "is capable of defending the revolution itself. But should the need arise, we will all – old and the young alike – go into battle!"

...At six a.m. on may 15th the farewell meeting opened. It was addressed by the commander of the motorized infantry brigade, Colonel Yuri Starov.

The soldiers marched past the tribune. The band played an old military march. Colonel Pellnäs remarked to me:

"I thought only the Swedes had melancholy military marches..."

There was a minute's silence in honour of those who had lost their lives.

The first column – more than one thousand soldiers – began its journey towards Kabul.

Some of the journalists hopped on board the armoured cars and, together with the soldiers, tried to catch the flowers and garlands thrown by the people of Jalalabad and neighbouring villages, who had come to see the Soviet soldiers off. Someone threw a melon. It was caught and promptly eaten.

The road taken by the military vehicles was lined with people shouting words of greeting; and so many children that one had the impression that the average age of an Afghan must be somewhere around 12. They ran after the vehicles, throwing flowers to the soldiers, catching those thrown to them from another vehicle, and then throwing it back to the next one...

"They have fine children," private Victor Kirillov, who comes from near Pskov, shouted to me above the roar of the motors. Later, after spending several hours on the armoured car under the scorching sun, he told me that he is married and that he and his wife want a child.

"Right away, the moment I get back," he told me seriously.

I half lay on my bullet-proof vest, which I had no inclination to put on (it weighs 18 kgs.) in such heat, and listening to Victor Kirillov, a scout and grenade thrower, and his fellow scout, sniper Andrei Volkov. They described episodes of the war in what is probably the most troubled of the border provinces, Kunar. They had operated as scouts and set up ambushes.

We had left Jalalabad at 7 in the morning, and we arrived in Kabul covered with a layer of white dust at four in the afternoon. We had passed canyons and ravines, looking up at the swiftly-flowing cool water of a mountain stream, and sharing the last drops from our overheated flasks. At times the soldiers would tense up looking into the overhanging mountain ledges. They had been in these parts and remembered the battles that had been fought here. Here and there in the ditches on the side of the road we passed the charred and damaged remains of military vehicles, lorries and buses. But we completed the journey without losses.

The units of the Soviet contingent and the Afghan army demonstrated that they are in control of the situation and that attacks of bands can be prevented. The artillery units standing guard along the road had only to open fire a couple of times, and as we passed we could see the smoke on the slopes. According to the men of this reconnaissance unit, those were probably pre-emptive shots, fired at places known from past experience, to be dangerous.

Then finally, the warm welcome in Kabul. Colonel Pellnas and his blue beret colleagues watched the column from their jeep. The first part of their mission had been successfully completed. The Soviet Union was abiding strictly by its obligations. The next morning – the farewell meeting in Kabul.

President Najibullah wished the Soviet soldiers a safe journey home. "Best regards and all our gratitude to the Soviet people from the people of Afghanistan," he said.

"Board your vehicles!"

The column set out for the Soviet border.

Jalalabad – Kabul TASS photos

Green, the colour of spring

Albertas Laurinciukas

(From the writer's diary)

"I've just returned from Kabul," the familiar voice boomed down the telephone line. "I'm back in Vilnius." "And I'm flying to Afghanistan today." "Give it my best regards. I've left part of my life there."

From a telephone conversation with military adviser Edmundas Kasperavicius.

The first time I visited Afghanistan was in 1982. The second was in 1986, and this was my third trip.

A journalist from New York I spoke to in Kabul compared Afghanistan to a tiger's skin. That is not quite correct. There are two colours on a tiger's skin, while there are a great many colours and shades in Afghanistan.

All three trips I have made to Afghanistan took place either in spring or early in summer. This year the colour green seemed much more widespread, and not just because summer had come earlier.

An official at Kabul airport stamped my passport with a green stamp. We were driven along green streets to the Ariana Hotel, next to which the wind ruffled the national flag of the Republic of Afghanistan with its green stripe. Revolutionary spirit and black tragedy, the mirages of hope and the rocks of reality are of different colours. Green is the colour of spring and hope. "Verde que te quiero verde," as Federico Garcia Lorca put it.

The Afghan people live in the hope that at long last the fratricidal war, a war with no clearly defined front line, will come to an end. But it would be self-deception to see only green colours in Afghanistan.

I had the chance to look many brave men in the eyes.

"I shall feel uncomfortable returning home with a military decoration on my chest," one soldier told me. My friend was taken home in a coffin... I was luckier than he was, but not braver... There is a veteran of Afghanistan living in Lithuania. He went through great sufferings. After a battle in the mountains, he was wounded and captured, taken to Pakistan and thence to Canada. He insisted that he be allowed to return home. And finally they let him go. In Stalin's day, a soldier taken prisoner would have been proclaimed a traitor, with all the ensuing consequences. Now new moral and ethical principles are taking root....

The bitter realities in Afghanistan have produced many heroes. Some returned with military decorations, others with wounds, and others again were brought home in their coffins. Heroes are always modest, but modesty is a quality common only to heroes. For there is someone else who decides that modest heroes should be lauded modestly, given a modest home-coming on their return from Afghanistan, or a modest funeral...

A farewell to arms?

Soon the "black tulips" will no longer make their journeys. Mothers whose sons are being called up for military service will be able to sleep peacefully.

The greatest heroism of our days is the boldness with which Moscow is resolving the problem of Afghanistan. Those who work for peace, take humane decisions and abandon old ideas can also be heroes.

The Hotel Ariana is guarded by people with automatic weapons. They open the gates for us, meet us journalists and see us off with friendly smiles. When the guard on duty at the gates gives a salute and clicks his heels, a cloud of dust goes up. There has been no rain in Kabul for a long time, and there is dust everywhere. But it is easier to combat the dust in Afghanistan than fight the armed opposition. The dust remains, penetrating every crevice, even, as one of our soldiers told me, tinned food. Only a heavy rainfall can cope with the dust. It brings a breath of fresh air with it.

Clouds carrying blessed rain are gathering in the skies of Afghanistan. The rain must wash away the layers of dust that have accumulated over the years.

The Afghan journalist Nasrin told me a legend she had heard as a child at her mother's knee. A tigress had three small cubs. One day she went out hunting for food for them. While she was away a lion approached her lair and, imitating her voice, told the cubs to open the door. The lion was hungry and quickly swallowed two of the cubs, while the third had managed to hide. When the tigress returned and learned what had happened, she at once went to the local knife-grinder, and asked him to sharpen her teeth. In return for this favour, she brought the grinder some milk. Then the lion came and made the same request. He promised to pay

Spring is here, and a long-awaited peace coming... No wonder they are all smiles!

in rice, but instead brought a box filled with pebbles. The grinder was furious, and instead of sharpening the lion's teeth, he blunted them. In the fight that ensued between the tigress and the lion, it was the sharp-toothed tigress that emerged victorious. She tore open the lion's stomach and removed her cubs, which were mercifully still alive, and all three returned safely home.

What is the moral of this fable? Some say that it means you must always keep your teeth sharp, others – that you must always be honest. The lion lost, because he had plundered and, what's more, he had tried to deceive the grinder.

The people are tired of the fratricidal war and slogans promising a quick victory in the fight between the lion and tigress. They want to bring up their children, grow grain, build homes and schools, and lie down to sleep without a rifle at the bedside. The policy of reconciliation is an effective means of implementing the ideas of the April revolution.

" Revolutionaries always seek to go ahead of the times, their dreams hover above the realities," an Afghan professor remarked to me. "But when, after the victory of the April revolution, it was proclaimed that social progress in the country would be ensured by the dictatorship of the proletariat, many people, even supporters of the revolution, were amazed and frightened. How can there be a dictatorship of the proletariat in a country with a tiny working class? The revolution in our country was carried out not by the workers, the urban and rural poor, but by a group of progressive officers and intellectuals!"

The dictatorship of the proletariat was not the only reason for which the revolutionary spirit in the country cooled off. The policy of mass terror pursued by Amin, who had taken power in the party and government, produced abhorrence and resistance. I was told how victims of the Amin regime were dropped from aircraft without parachutes... Millions of people left their homes and fled to Pakistan and Iran. A long and cruel fratricidal war began.

Several million people have been unable to take part in parliamentary elections, as they still live abroad. The extremist forces boycotted the elections. On the day when mass festivities were being held at the central stadium, a bomb planted by terrorists in a passenger bus exploded in Kabul. Six people were killed and 49 injured. A few days later I heard in Kabul the sound of exploding rockets. All that is a warning that even after the successful parliamentary elections and the signing of the Geneva accords, the path to universal peace on Afghan soil will not be an easy one.

The policy of national reconciliation is making headway, overcoming numerous obstacles. Some are to be found in the heart of each individual. How can one pull down the high fence erected over the years between the concept of "friend" and "enemy," if you are talking about the same people?

Nostalgia can be stronger than a feeling of love or vengeance. Only people who have lived far away from their homeland for a long time can understand that.

Because of the tragic turn circumstances took, almost five million Afghans live in Pakistan, Iran and other countries. Now they have begun to return to their home country. At first timidly, then more boldly, and now, today, the process is gathering momentum.

The founder of the Indian Moghul dynasty Babur is buried on the left bank of the Kabul river. His first major victory was won on its banks, and to commemorate it he ordered that a garden be planted there. The mighty ruler died in India in the town of Agra. Before his death he asked to be buried in Kabul, in the garden he had planted.

An old plane tree. Its leaves give the ground and people shade. Some of its boughs hang down, and if it were not for props would have broken a long time ago. The garden will endure, the trees will not.

Babur dreamed of creating an empire that would last forever. It fell apart. But the gardens he planted survive to this day.

Abdul Gaffar Khan, that outstanding son of the Pushtuns, returned, also posthumously, to his native land last January. A follower of Gandhi and Nehru, he died in Pakistan in the town of Peshawar, shortly before his hundredth birthday. Abdul Gaffar Khan spent forty years in British colonialist prisons. Like Gandhi, he preached a non-violent struggle for rights. Life is full of paradoxes: buses carrying people to his funeral were blown up. Had Abdul Gaffar Khan spent the best 40 years of his life in prison for the ideas of justice, humanity and peace in vain, if people going to his funeral were killed?

The funeral was attended by President Najibullah. On that day the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan displayed wisdom in jointly sponsoring the funeral, which was attended by tens of thousands. But one should not get together only when a grave has to be dug...

The force with which your homeland pulls you is like a mighty and unsurmountable force of gravity. He who can cut himself off from that force is no victor.

Not everyone returns to Afghanistan from abroad in their coffins. Thousands have already returned to their homeland. Nostalgia can tear people's hearts, but the harsh realities often dictate their own terms.

The refugee problem is one of the most important ones facing Afghanistan. It is made up of the problems of several million individuals.

Jungalak is a district of Kabul. There is a hotel there – Solh (Peace) – where Afghans returning from abroad are settled. Looking out of one of the hotel windows I saw a heap of battered old cars. Once they had shone brilliantly in the sun as they were driven along the streets of Kabul: today they await their inevitable end in a scrapyard, and will only be able to start a new life after going through the flames of a smelting furnace. But what will happen to the people who, at the fateful crossroads, chose to break with their country, but are now returning to its fold?

A woman with a brood of children appeared. Pishtana Salandari is a mother of 8. She is thirty years old, but looks older. She has black hair, dark eyes, but her movements are timid.

"Last year in Kachakala, Pakistan, I buried my husband," she said. He dreamed of returning to our country, but time ran out for him. Had he been alive, he could have told you a great deal. But I am illiterate, and I can't describe things or events."

"How did you come to be in Pakistan?"

"We lived in Jalalabad. When the Amin terror began, many of our neighbours decided to move temporarily to Pakistan. We joined them. The children and I arrived in Kabul three days ago. We were provided with shelter and food. I left Pakistan together with some kind people who allowed my children to ride on their camel. As for me, I walked along the mountain paths.

"And what do you plan to do now?"

"I'd like to find a job and place the youngsters temporarily in a children's home."

"How did you manage in Pakistan?"

"My husband worked round the clock to feed the family. For the children and myself the rocks of our country are better than anything else in the world."

"You said you returned to Afghanistan secretly along mountain paths. Why? That was taking a big risk, especially with children."

"I was not alone. Kind people helped me. I didn't want my children to be deprived of their motherland."

"Do your husband's family know that he died and that you have returned to Afghanistan?"

"My husband was an orphan. He had no parents, no brothers or sisters. And now he lies all alone in an alien land."

After a bomb exploded outside the Pamir cinema, killing and wounding 59 passers-by, and a ground-to-ground missile went off near our hotel, patrols in Kabul were stepped up. Perhaps I looked suspicious, because once a Soviet patrol stopped me on the street.

"I'm a Soviet journalist, the guest of the Republic of Afghanistan," I said in reply to their question.

"You're from the Baltic republics," exclaimed one of the soldiers. "Perhaps even from Lithuania?"

"Yes!"I replied in Lithuanian. "If you like, I can phone your mother when I got back".

"Please don't,"replied the soldier, holding his automatic weapon in both hands. "It will only upset her. I'll be back soon".

"This year, for the first time in many years, we observed Mother's Day," I told him.

"Mothers,"he replied,"are honoured and respected all the year round..."

Suhala Sidik is the chief medical officer at Kabul military hospital. She is the only woman with the rank of General in the country. A surgeon by profession, she wears her military uniform well. Who looking at her could guess her age?

"Since the launching of the policy of national reconciliation," she said, "the number of wounded has dropped, and the wounds are different now. Most of those in hospital today have been injured by mines going off."

"You've been working for many years in a military hospital: aren't you tired? "I asked.

"It's not me who's tired of the war, but the entire nation."

"Islamic traditions are deep-rooted in Afghanistan. You are a woman, and a surgeon at that. Excuse the question, but doesn't that make life even harder for you?"I put the question rather awkwardly.

"Not at all," replied Suhala Sidik."In the hospital everyone calls me Mother."

"What makes you happy?"

"When a dying man is out of danger."

Later I learned that she was a relative of the country's former President Daud. She had begun working in the hospital immediately after the April revolution. She was unmarried and childless, and her entire life was dedicated to returning wounded soldiers to their mothers. Was that why everyone called her Mother?

I visited the hospital together with the correspondent for the paper Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya, Yuri Kirpichnikov. His mother too had been a surgeon. During the Great Patriotic War she had worked in a military hospital. She had brought up four war orphans that she had taken into her home. Yuri's real parents were killed in the very first days of the war in Byelorussia, when a train was bombed. The three-year-old boy survived and was sent to a children's home in Barnaul. One day after the war ended the surgeon Yulia Kirpichnikova visited the town.

"When I saw her," Yuri told me, "I ran up to her – to this day I don't know why – but I pressed myself against her and said: You're Mummy."

On the road down south from Kabul we met a column of Soviet tanks. American, French and Japanese newsmen leaned out of the windows of the bus as far as they could and began taking photographs. The drivers stopped to make it easier for them... Afterwards my colleagues began talking about the possible course events could take.

"The Soviet Union has promised to withdraw half of its contingent from Afghanistan in the first three months after May 15th. If Moscow sees that the situation is getting more difficult, it could change its plans..."

"You have no faith in the Geneva agreements?"

"Any agreement can be interpreted broadly or more narrowly..."

"What conclusions are the Soviet people drawing from the Soviet army's defeat in Afghanistan, like the United States' in Vietnam?"

"There can be no comparison with Vietnam..."

"I'm not sure that Washington really wants the opponents of present Afghan government to come out on top. It wants stability in this part of the world. It has more than enough problems with the Islamic extremists who took power in Iran. It doesn't want another Khomeini..."

"I disagree completely!"

"But the Geneva documents were signed by Shultz."

"That doesn't mean a thing. Diplomats exist to conceal the truth..."

When at last we reached a small village at the end of a twisting, dusty road, we were met by armed men and women. I noticed a boy of about 8 firmly clasping an automatic weapon made of wood and decorated with flowers. He looked serious. For lads like him, this was no game, but part of their life.

An American journalist started putting questions to an armed woman with two youngsters clinging to her skirts.

"How many people have you shot dead?" he asked bluntly.

"None,"replied the woman.

"Because you missed your target?"

"Our village has lived in peace for two years."

"Then why are you carrying a weapon instead of a child?"

The woman placed her hand on one of the children's heads, stroked it and replied:

"Because I want him to survive..."

The Kabul river lives and flows only while the show is melting in the mountains. In summer its rocky bed is parched by the sun. The rocks and the cold water of the river can warm people's hearts better than the flames of a campfire.

What lies before Afghanistan now?

The course of national reconciliation is a hard one, but under the circumstances it is the only right one.

Next year, as the press has reported, Soviet cosmonauts are planning a space flight that will include an Afghan cosmonaut. The best guarantee that the flight will take place is an end to the fratricidal war.

We flew home on a Boeing belonging to the Afghan Ariana Airline. After circling over Kabul, the plane set its course to the north.

In the lives of individuals and nations, routes can be much more complicated.

Photos by author

Kabul–Vilnius

Unjustified hopes or normal difficulties?

On this occasion – for the last time before the Moscow summit – Eduard Shevardnadze and George Shultz met in Geneva, the city where a few years ago the leaders of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. began their difficult joint journey to nuclear disarmament and a safer world.

Soviet-American dialogue – to judge from the results of the ministers' talks – is now being expanded in all directions – in the field of security, humanitarian cooperation and human rights, and regional and bilateral problems.

The ministers considered all aspects of the forthcoming meeting between the two leaders, including the preparation of major bilateral agreements. The Soviet Union handed over to its partner detailed data on the makeup of Soviet strategic forces, including information on its sea-based cruise missiles (it remains to be hoped that our experts will shortly make this information available to Soviet journalists as well.

What arouses the greatest concern is the fate of the agreement on a 50 per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons with the ABM treaty being observed in the form in which it was signed in 1972. Soviet and American representatives now say openly that they will be unable to complete work on it in time for the coming summit. However, both sides are seeking to settle as many controversial issues as possible. Their aim is to get the points agreed on recognized at the Moscow summit and move on from there. In other words, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. regard the fourth meeting between their leaders as another stage on the way to a new agreement. No one is prepared to say when it might be signed. When I spoke to him during his April visit to Moscow Secretary of State George Shultz in effect rejected the possibility of yet another, fifth, summit during the present President's term of office. But a couple of days ago William Burns, Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, said that before Reagan leaves the White House there will be time to arrange a fifth meeting to sign the agreement. However, I feel that in view of the objective political situation inside the United States itself, George Shultz's view is more realistic.

The ministers made substantial progress on the issue of control over nuclear explosions and their subsequent limitation, with a view to their eventual discontinuation. From my conversations with informed people from the Soviet Foreign Ministry, I gathered that the signing of such an agreement in Moscow is on the cards.

The dialogue on conventional weapons and the drafting of a mandate for future talks was more productive than on the previous occasion.

The difficulties in Geneva arose where it seemed that controversial views had long been cleared up: on the already signed INF treaty. On the eve of the Ministers' Geneva talks, the U.S. Senate suspended the ratification debate "until the American Administration and the Soviets resolve the problems that have surfaced." Nine in all were identified. For the most part they concern verification and the ban on "futuristic" weapons – missiles equipped with lasers (incidentally, even before the Senate decision, both Soviet and American representatives had stated that they regarded such systems as coming under the ban). Soviet experts believed that questions concerning verification factors could be resolved on a day-to-day basis as they arose on the basis of the text of the Treaty. But since things had gone so far, a second look had to be taken. Two documents designed to remove any ambiguities were signed. The first imposes a ban on the development of new types of weapon that could replace the nuclear arms to be destroyed, and the second sets out in detail the procedure for verification of the treaty's observance.

"Such, apparently, is the nature of Soviet-American relations at the present stage," Eduard Shevardnadze told journalists, "that we still have to pay the price for mutual mistrust."

Right from the first Geneva meeting between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, representatives of extreme right-wing circles in the United States opposed to dialogue with Moscow did their utmost to put up obstacles on the road to the normalization of Soviet-American relations and disarmament. In the Soviet Union, too, there were sceptics who believed that the "love affair" with the Americans would end sooner or later in divorce, as had already been the case in the past.

The difficulties today have not lessened. And I think that their emergence where they were least expected is not accidental.

On the issue of ratification, the Senators' stand is influenced not only by mistrust of their Soviet partner, but also by the inter-party struggle being waged by the Democratic leaders who strive to prevent the Republican administration from getting such a trump card as the INF treaty. Moreover, some prominent Democrats, who in principle take a broader view of national security, have clearly let themselves be taken in by the traditional Reagan rhetoric. For their part, right-wing Republicans, by stalling on the ratification process, are clearly trying to torpedo the work on a 50 per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons

In the Soviet Union, with its one-party system, the ratification process is proceeding without surprises. But the sceptics were up in arms right away: "Retaliatory steps should be taken. It would have been naive to expect anything else from the Americans." This scepticism, in turn, plays into the hands of those who mistrust, or are even hostile, to new thinking, democratization and glasnost.

But let's take a look at how we define the productiveness of Soviet-American relations. What do we consider a successful result of a summit? Only a package of signed agreements?

What did the policy of tit for tat give us, except tension and colossal expenditure?

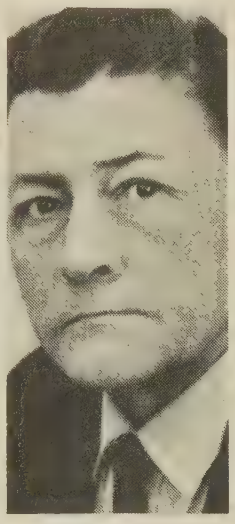
I would describe the development of Soviet-American relations as proceeding along a spiral. There can be stoppages and even back stepping. However, I'm convinced that this back stepping will no longer be simply a repetition of what happened in the years of the cold war, or during the détente of the seventies. A great deal has changed, both in political priorities and in ourselves. Our way of thinking is changing, along with the attitudes of Russians and Americans to each other, and the very psychology of our relations, while hostile stereotypes are crumbling. Never before have there been so many contacts between our countries at the level of ordinary people. All that, taken together, produces an entirely new fabric of Soviet-American relations, which in future could insure us against turnabouts to confrontation at the political level.

At the present twist of the spiral, one has to learn to react calmly and wisely to the problems that our partner comes up against or for which he is responsible. I believe that in the case of the INF treaty it was the sensible and calm way in which experts in the two countries reacted to the Senators' demands that brought ratification much closer, and made it once again possible on the eve of the summit.

GALINA SIDOROVA

Who's out of step

Vitaly Ganyushkin



An abuse of democracy

Among the initiators of the strike at the Gdansk shipyards there were a number of "toughies" who toured the shops and offered those who had turned up to work a sort of choice: stop work or else you'll be in trouble – you could be killed, dropped into the canal or thrown out... Other methods were also used to forcibly "recruit" strikers.

The public opinion polls held hard on the heels of the events showed quite clearly where the sympathies of the Polish people lay: 62 per cent of those polled were against strike action, while 13 per cent were undecided; compared with the poll conducted three days earlier, the number of people opposing such a form of protest had increased by 12 per cent. Heartening statistics, if one bears in mind that at this watershed – the attitude of the Poles themselves to the events at certain enterprises – it was the fate of the entire process of renovation now under way in Poland that was at stake.

The recent price increases (largely compensated for, incidentally, by a boost in wages) were probably unenthusiastically received by the majority of workers, who refused to give in to the pressure of the strike organizers. But they seem to have retained their dignity, maturity as citizens and plain common sense, and realized how difficult it was to pick up the pieces after the previous crisis, so they just couldn't inflict direct damage, that could be counted in zlotys, on their factories, and their country as a whole. Unfortunately, not everyone shared this awareness. Groups of workers at the Nowa Huta works and the Gdansk shipyards let themselves be taken in by the demagogy of the notorious representatives of the so-called illegal opposition groups, each of whom one could name personally – and downed tools in order to present an ultimatum to their own country, one that would have cost it too dear and, in the present circumstances, simply couldn't be met. In other words, they used the highway robber's formula: your money or your life. They were goaded and pushed into this by people who themselves hadn't worked for years and were trying to stop others working.

When you read the reports on the recent events in Poland, including those in the Western press, you can't help noticing that here and there on the crest of the murky wave one comes across the names of activists familiar from former crisis situations, who have very little to do with work collectives. Except perhaps for Lech Walesa... As a Polish journalist aptly pointed out, when the factory fence is crossed, that spells an end to all economic and legal laws and marks the beginning of a tough political struggle. And that's what happened: taking advantage of the demands of a section of the workers for higher pay, the advocates on the other side of the fence immediately tried to pin their own political flags to the movement. But this time they miscalculated: they found no support even among those on whose demands they had sought to play for their own far-reaching stakes.

They failed to take into account the obvious fact that Poland today has changed, that its healthy and strengthening forces have chosen a creative, not a destructive strategy to rebuild their own house. And they provided convincing confirmation of this during the recent events. They demonstrated it not only in the opinion polls, but also in the direct appeals sent by work collectives from different corners of Poland to the strikers to come to their senses. It was evident from the sensible stand taken by the country's trade unions, and the reasonable appeals made in the press by people from all walks of life. And finally, by the fact that the strikes were just isolated incidents, while the Polish working people at large displayed a profound sense of responsibility and did not let themselves be taken in by the dire calls of the self-appointed ideologists.

How other than as public irresponsibility can one describe the actions of the group of activists behind the disorders, who treacherously used the democratization under way in the country to damage its national economy, and the democratization process as well? Surely the long years of at times bitter experience of Poland and other socialist countries should have taught us all the simple truism that democracy is constructive only when it is combined with awareness on the part of each individual of his responsibility for the highest strategic interests of the country and the people. Yet it seems that not everyone has learnt that lesson. Those who didn't are responding to the call of those for whom the interests of a people's and socialist Poland were and remain alien.

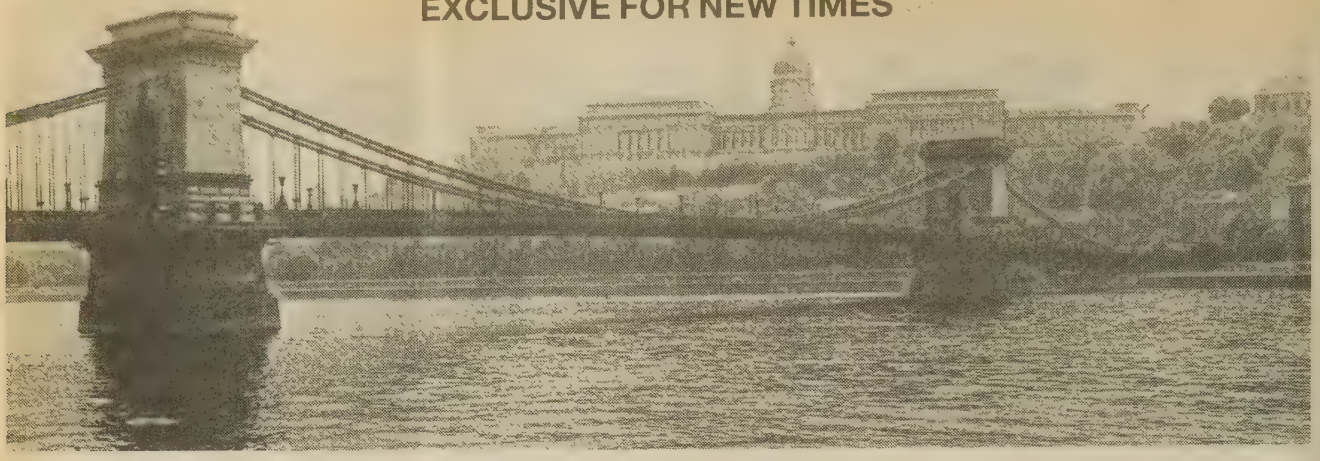
As Wojciech Jaruzelski pointed out in a recent speech, the difficulties the country is facing are once again being used as a weapon against socialism, and therefore against the interests of society. Meeting during these events, the Politbureau of the Polish United Workers' Party stated that it fully understood and shared the peoples' concern, and favoured any contradictions or problems that might arise being settled jointly with the work collectives. However, such a search for solutions should be guided by realism and a sense of responsibility.

All of us living in socialist countries today are learning to live and work in conditions of democracy. It is not an easy lesson, and at times we have to pay a high price. But it is clear that those who are trying to turn the democratic forms and institutions already created against the aims of perestroika and renovation are least of all concerned with democracy and the interests of us all.

Poland's tradition of tolerance is widely known. In recent years it has received qualitatively new constitutional enactment. But tolerance cannot be endless or all-forgiving.

None other than Lech Walesa, addressing the strikers, said: "We must share all we have equally." How true! But one can share fairly only what we have all earned together. Yet each shift disrupted by the strike action he led cost the shipyards hundreds of thousands of lost work hours...

EXCLUSIVE FOR NEW TIMES



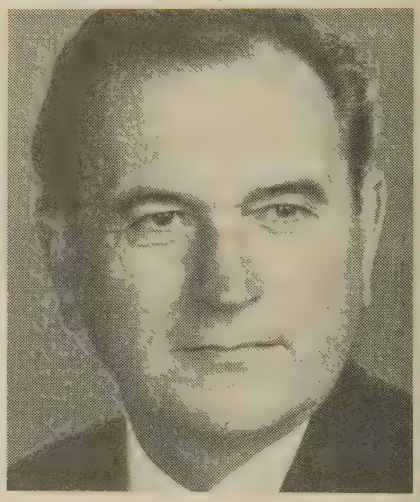
Karoly Grosz:

Setting the stage for further advance

The Hungarian economic reform, which started in 1968 and attracted considerable attention in socialist countries, has proceeded unevenly over the past two decades. According to economist Ivan Berend, President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the reform came to a standstill in the mid-seventies, only to recover its impetuous momentum shortly afterwards. Nevertheless, the country has more than its share of social and political problems. At one time, Hungary borrowed large sums from international banks. The money was initially made good use of, but in 1986 the foreign market situation deteriorated (the prices of some Hungarian products fell by from 30 to 50 per cent), while industry failed to make up for the resulting losses by manufacturing competitive export items. The state budget deficit increased. Prices of consumer goods are to rise by 15-17 per cent this year. Needless to say, this forced measure is unpopular.

Last autumn, the country's National Assembly discussed ways of rectifying the situation. It mapped out a wide range of measures – a plan for regrouping its forces, as it were – aimed at ruling out unprofitability, reducing the specific consumption of materials and energy, improving import trade, and intensifying and varying cooperation with Hungary's socialist partners. These and other matters will, no doubt, come in for extensive discussion in the course of the Hungarian National Party Conference.

On the eve of the conference, Yuri Shevchenko, our special correspondent, went to Budapest to put a number of questions to KAROLY GROSZ, Chairman of the Council of Ministers.



New Times. Comrade Grosz, how would you evaluate the current political and economic situation in your country?

Karoly Grosz. The controversial situation in our economy and our society as a whole has taken shape over a long period – the past fifteen years, as a matter of fact. As a result, the implementation of our stabilization and prosperity programme will take quite a while. Generally speaking, programmes of this kind cannot be carried out overnight, even if people are eager to get quick results. This is obvious. If we succeed in stopping the processes which have landed our economy in trouble (or even in near-crisis, as some are inclined to think) in three years from now, this will be a considerable achievement.

As for public life, our people realize (which is very important) that we want a more efficient and functional socialism in this time of historic changes. A new national unity is manifesting itself in society.

And now a few words about the economic situation. Statistics for the first quarter of the year suggest that positive processes are under way in our economic structures. Our exports to clients who pay in hard currency have increased, and our imports have somewhat diminished. The result is an improvement in the foreign trade balance. Our industrial output so far corresponds to the planned figure. Wages are stabilizing. Price levels are not very different from our expectations early this year. This is good news, but it does not offset our economic and social problems and the controversies that have accumulated over the years. Favourable trends aren't yet strong enough, and we still fall short of the targets set by our programme. Our production structure leaves much to be desired, the specific consumption of materials in our industry has not decreased, and our commodity turnover remains uneven.

In our opinion, we shall be able to retain social stability – and moreover, achieve a

new social accord – only if we make up our minds to carry out changes at all levels, and in all spheres. We must give a more profound analysis to the past of socialism and make full use of its potential for renovation; by this potential I mean the emergent new thinking and readiness for reform manifesting itself in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

It is necessary to take our people's various interests into account to a much greater extent than before, and to coordinate them more thoroughly and in more detail. Social accord is not a static phenomenon; on the contrary, it is a process which must be our constant concern and part of our life. The time when we hoped to establish cooperation in all spheres for as long as a whole epoch is past. I think that we are now entering a period when we must work for universal accord together, from day to day. This presupposes the development of a democracy that is socialist in form and content, and openness in all spheres.

The state has started revising many of its objectives. It is sufficient to mention the changes which have taken place, within a short period, in the separation of the functions of parliament and government. The idea is that the national authorities will, from now on, deal only with matters which cannot be handled at other levels.

Today I believe it to be expedient to carry on the reforms in two directions. First: government bodies ought to stop the practice, which still persist, of keeping enterprises, cooperatives and individuals under tutelage. Many mistakenly see this as a retreat on the part of the state. In my opinion, such a "retreat" can only benefit the state.

Second: wherever the state delegates its powers to the public, systems of self-governing institutes are to emerge. They will enable citizens to engage in independent activities – within the appropriate legal and organizational limits, of course. As for the government, it should concentrate above all on running the country and tackling conceptual problems, the economy, and domestic and foreign policy.

With all this in view, we are continuing to reform the internal organizational structure of government bodies. At the same time, the terms of reference of the government as a political organization are continuously expanding. It is to be accountable to parliament for its actions, and to the party for its handling of political matters.

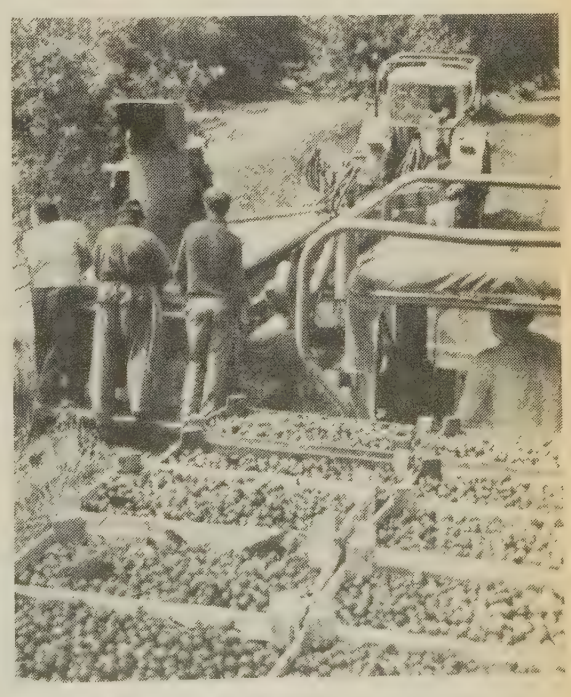
We are holding a national conference of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party in a few days' time. The public gives every appearance of being extremely interested in it. This is natural and very gratifying. At the same time, one senses tension mounting in many parts of the country as the conference approaches, and this is fraught with a certain danger. I am convinced that the most important job of the conference is to promote moral unity in the country. It is hardly likely, of course, to bring about lasting unity on all issues. This will have to be constantly maintained and promoted. As for party unity, we must impart a new meaning to this idea. We must work out a common programme and set the stage for action in the course of discussions which bring out different views and interests. This unity inevitably presupposes compromises because different opinions are bound to be voiced from day to day. It is precisely in such a situation that the attainment of unity assumes special importance. Personally, I regard this as the priority objective of the conference. It's time the Party brought into play its most active members who are not afraid of being held responsible for the consequences that could ensue from the current situation, and who are prepared to cope with all the problems involved in asserting the leading role of the Party. This is the second objective – and the condition upon which the conference will be able to achieve its third objective: enlisting as many people as possible into the implementation of the programme.

N.T. Comrade Grosz, your country played host recently to Nikolai Ryzhkov, Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers. What were the results of the visit, in your view?

K.G. We regard Comrade Ryzhkov's visit as having been extremely useful and constructive. We exchanged political experience and signed concrete agreements as a function of bilateral cooperation.

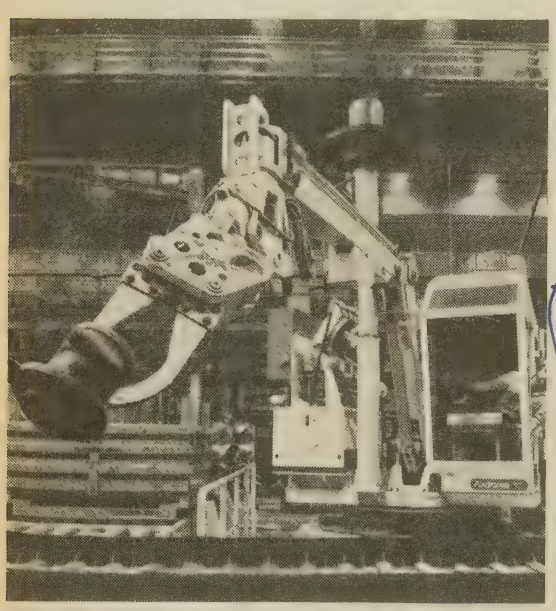
As regards questions of fundamental importance for our two countries, our negotiations with Nikolai Ryzhkov have reaffirmed the fact that the Soviet and Hungarian governments see eye to eye on international processes, the need for promoting ties between socialist countries (the Soviet Union and Hungary included), and the timeliness of the reforms now under way in both countries.

While exchanging views on foreign policy matters, we said that our country, which by virtue of its geographical location is extremely interested in international cooperation, fully supports the spread of new thinking initiated by the Soviet Union. The open Hungarian economy is extremely sensitive to all developments in international politics and the world economy. Naturally, therefore, conflict situations have an adverse effect on it. Unlike economic and political conflicts, increasingly close international cooperation based on the awareness by all countries of their interdependence creates incomparably better external conditions for our domestic economic policy and creative work. Giving wholehearted and active support to the Soviet Union's peace policy is therefore in the national interests of the Hungarian People's Republic. We told Comrade Ryzhkov we were interested in the deepening of Soviet-American dialogue. This dialogue serves to improve the international situation as a whole, curb the arms race and eliminate the "hot spots" on the planet. We also told him we were on the threshold of a new age of cooperation between socialist countries.



The Aranykalasz farming cooperative is a vegetable and fruit producer well known in and outside Hungary.

As every socialist country seeks its own course of economic progress, these quests, far from distracting attention from international political cooperation, throw into sharp relief all the essential conditions for this cooperation and the challenge of the coming period in the development of socialism. We fully agreed with Nikolai Ryzhkov that from now on the emphasis in our cooperation should be on direct links between enterprises, research centres and institutions. The central authorities will have to provide political and economic conditions for the establishment of such direct links, and offer the requisite opportunities and stimuli – based, of course, on the laws of the planned socialist market. The two sides endorsed the practice of bilaterally discussing and resolving individual problems of cooperation to which no solutions have as yet been found within the framework of multilateral relations.



The new moulding shop at the Raba Engineering Plant.

In our discussions with the Soviet Prime Minister, we paid much attention to the forms and methods of socio-economic renewal in Hungary and the Soviet Union. We discussed these matters openly and frankly, without formalism or preconceptions. For our part, we stressed on more than one occasion that our Party and government, and all Hungarians, were interested in the success of Soviet perestroika. We are proud that our Soviet comrades are drawing upon the experience of Hungary, among other countries. I must say that in the further pursuance of our current social practices, we shall have a great deal to learn from the U.S.S.R. Specifically, the organic nature of the economic and political reforms is certainly an example to follow. I am convinced that Hungarian and Soviet records of political reforms complement each other. The quests that China, Poland and other socialist countries are engaged in also benefit socialism. All these efforts, which naturally bear the stamp of national specifics in each particular case, have one aim in common: to make better and fuller use of the potential inherent in the socialist system. This is an imperative of the time, the top item on the agenda today.

N.T. Could you dwell in greater detail on the state of affairs in the field of Soviet-Hungarian cooperation?

K.G. The negotiations at Prime Ministerial level have shown, once again, that Hungarian-Soviet cooperation remains as close and varied as ever. It is making continuous headway virtually all along the line. We are unanimous in our assessment of the outlook for our relations. The coordination of the objectives pursued by your perestroika and the Hungarian reforms affords new opportunities to both countries. This is in the vital interests of our nations and the cause of socialism in the Soviet Union and Hungary.

I think that at this juncture many elements of our cooperation are ripe for reform. Our interaction is about to take on a new quality. Direct production and research links, as well as joint ventures, are the key factors in this breakthrough. Progress in this sphere is complicated by the fact that we are having to re-assess many elements of our economic practice and carry out a number of all-embracing reforms. There are problems galore, but time does not stand still. We should like to simplify somewhat the procedure for our direct dealings with many Soviet republics. Direct links have already been established with the Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. We expect to enter into fruitful economic dialogue with our partners in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Armenia.

We regard the concrete economic agreements signed during the visit of the Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers as very important. Meriting special attention in this context is the mutual intention to continue commodity exchange at the present level despite a decline in prices of raw material worldwide. As you know, the principle of price setting used by socialist countries in payments for mutual deliveries of raw materials is such that we fail to keep up with fluctuations in world prices. Therefore, we had our doubts as to whether the present level of commodity exchange could be maintained. The understanding reached at the talks has made that possible – given appropriate changes in the structure of our commodity exchange, of course.

We attach extraordinary importance to the fact that the Soviet side has undertaken to maintain the present level of fuel and raw material supplies to us over the next five-year period. This makes for considerable stability in our domestic economic processes as well as in our trade with your country.

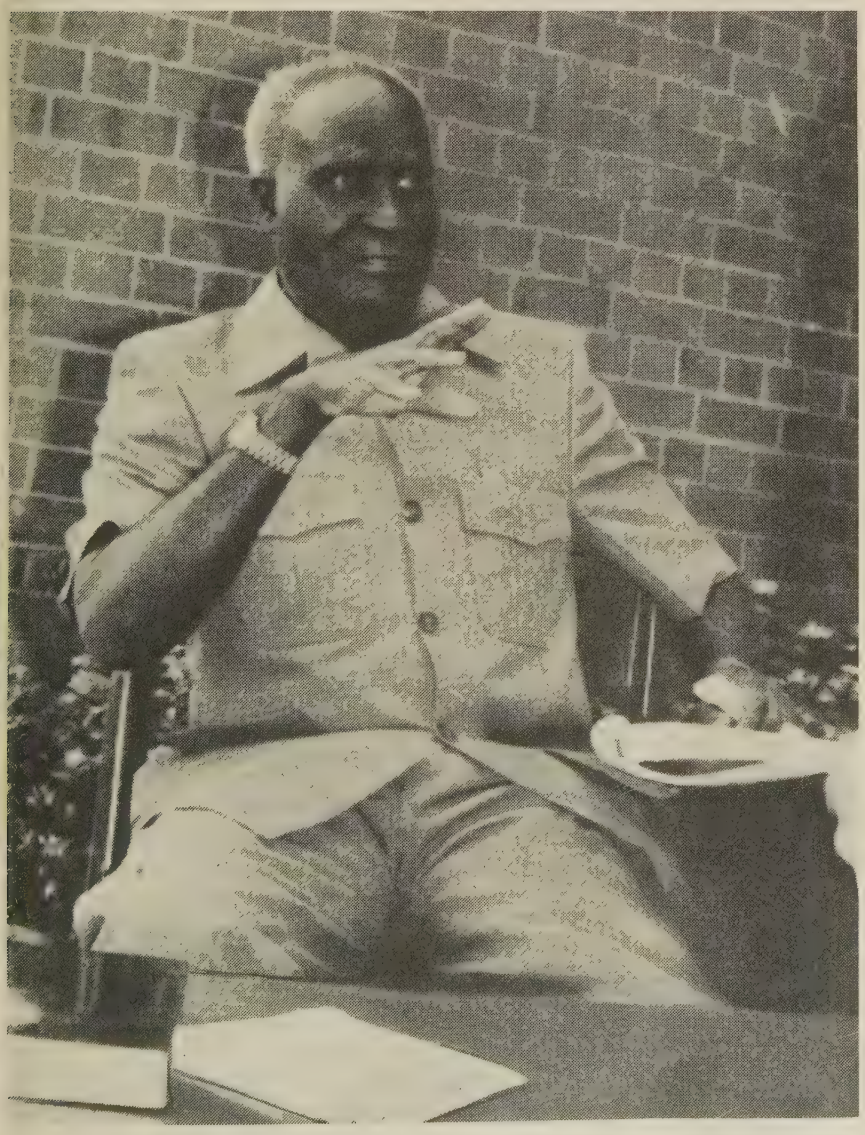
I should like to dwell in particular on the recently signed Hungarian-Soviet-Bulgarian agreement on cooperation in the automobile industry. Besides being of material benefit (each side is to get 50,000 modern cars a year), the agreement will help accumulate new experience in promoting socialist integration.

As we look into the future, we set great store by the programme for economic, scientific and technical cooperation between Hungary and the Soviet Union for 15-20 years ahead. This programme is now in its formative stage. Its objective is further to consolidate links between our two countries, improve the mechanism of our industrial cooperation, bring it into line with the demands of scientific and technological progress, and gear it to our common effort aimed at increasing the competitiveness of our products on the world market and, in the long run, stepping up economic efficiency and raising the standard of living in our two countries.

N.T. Thank you for the interview, Comrade Grosz. All of us at New Times wish the coming national party conference every success.

The leader

The story of a prominent African political leader – the President of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and President of Zambia ***Kenneth David Kaunda,*** *as told by our own correspondent Nikolai Reshetnyak*



I had met President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia on many occasions and in different circumstances, most often on official occasions. But this time he had agreed to receive me at his residence at 7 a.m.

The palace, built in colonial times, was quiet and empty. At that hour there were only cleaners around, and the staff of the presidential secretariat which worked round the clock. I asked the secretary if I had come too early. By no means, was the answer. The President had already been out on the sports grounds, looked through the Zambian papers and news international reports, and given a number of instructions to members of the cabinet...

Kenneth Kaunda met me with a smile.

"It's not quite the thing to invite a person at such an early hour, but it can't be helped – later in the day there won't be time to talk."

The interview was taking place on the eve of his 64th birthday. I wished him many happy returns and was about to add the usual good wishes but changed my mind and asked what would he wish himself on his birthday, and what he understood by the concept of happiness. He chose to reply to my second question first.

"I see happiness in struggle. In it I feel needed and feel my own strength. We fought against colonialism and, having won independence, are fighting for the rights of other oppressed peoples, supporting their mass movements, no matter in what corner of the earth they live. All who are fighting for justice can count on our backing. Our country opposes apartheid in South Africa and Israel's aggressive policy in the Middle East. We want freedom for Namibia and the defusing of the explosive situations in Central America and Afghanistan, in other words, wherever they exist.

What else should I add? I wish to leave the earth a better place than it was in my lifetime. So my aim (or you could call it happiness) in life is to serve people. That aim has been the lodestar of my whole life, and has determined my own principles. And in general, I would say life is not worth living if one doesn't devote it to serving people.

What I mean by serving people is fighting against everything that prevents their living with dignity. In the broad sense that means fighting colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, Zionism, racism and apartheid. Specifically, it means their

manifetations – hunger, deprivation of rights, crime, corruption, exploitation of man by man. We have witnessed all that and felt it on our own skins. So that is what we must fight against..."

The President stopped as if to reflect for a moment and then went on.

"You asked what I would wish myself on my birthday. Well, it would be staunchness in the struggle I spoke of. And of course – victory. What I want personally for myself, my family, is harder to say. I have nine children, one adopted. Last year I buried my son, who was very dear to me. I believed he would carry on the cause to which I had devoted my life...

"I have always wanted to be closer to the children, to my family, but it has rarely worked out that way. First there was the struggle for independence, prison, and I had to move frequently from place to place so as not to get caught. Then we won our freedom, but the work load did not become any less – it only changed into creative work. Still, I never have enough time. I return home late in the evening. My wife often tells me that the children ask: "Where is our President? Will he be home for supper?"

Kaunda smiled and gestured with his hands. Then he became serious again.

"I have written a book 'To My Children.' But it is addressed not so much to my family as to all Zambians. In it I call on them to work honestly, to be decent, love their country and all ordinary people on earth. That's what I tried to teach my own children – honesty, kindness and readiness to respond to the troubles of others. My wife Betty helped me in that. We were married in 1946 and she has had to go through a great deal. During the struggle for independence we had to go hungry and were glad of a bowl of corn flour. And we were happy because we had children. Later, when I was working to build up the party, my wife was busy organizing the women's movement. When I was jailed, she organized a protest march and was in the front ranks of the demonstrators. The police used tear gas, but she marched on. That meant a great deal in bringing up the children."

The President's story only barely touched on the system of principles, the theory of Zambian humanism which Kenneth Kaunda developed himself. It has been proclaimed official ideological doctrine and formulated in the two parts of Kaunda's main work, "Humanism in Zambia and a guide to its implementation," published in 1968 and 1974. In this theory one can trace the influence of the ideas of African nationalism, the British labour movement, Western social democracy and the Protestant religion.

Kaunda's theoretical concepts, which in many respects echo those of the esteemed Julius Nyerere who was a personal friend of his, are based on the recreation of the traditional African community but in conditions of commodity-monetary relations. In such a society, he believes, people should work collectively, own the products of their labour individually, and everything should be geared to the interests of the ordinary people. There should be a state regulating mechanism in such a society, but at the same time private property and private enterprise should be retained. Kaunda himself described his theory as a mixture of 19th-century capitalism and communism, which is bound to make Zambian socialism a humane and democratic system.

The President of Zambia is a believer in Pan-Africanism. In an interview published in 1983 in the magazine Africa Now, Kaunda gave his views on how the unity of the African countries could be achieved. Briefly: regional economic groups should first be set up and from there one could advance to political unity.

However, the problem of southern Africa looms as a serious obstacle to such unity. Kaunda favours a political settlement of the situation in the region. It should be resolved with the participation of all interested parties. The goal of any such settlement should be the abolition of the apartheid regime in South Africa, political independence for Namibia based on the well-known U.N. decisions, and guaranteed security for the frontline states.

This can only be achieved, according to the Zambian President, through the reduction of the economic and military potential of the racist regime by means of international sanctions.

Kenneth Kaunda's range of duties is immense. Apart from being Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, which is now marking its 25th birthday, in September 1985 he was elected leader of the group of frontline states (FLS). He seeks to unite the FLS to stand up to the aggressive political course pursued by Pretoria. He is opposed to the United States' linkage of a Namibian settlement with the withdrawal of the Cuban contingent from Angola. At the same time, President Kaunda seeks to mediate between the African National Congress (ANC), the West and certain business and public circles in South Africa. In February 1984, a meeting between representatives of the U.S.A., Angola and South Africa was held on his initiative in Lusaka.

On the Pan-African scale, Kenneth Kaunda is worried by the problem of the foreign indebtedness of the African countries.

"No true African leader," he told me "will refuse to pay his debts. All of us must pay them, but first give us a chance to develop, the chance to earn the money for the repayment. We have the manpower, the natural resources, but we lack the technology, the scientific knowledge and the necessary organizational structures. We invite all those concerned to come to our country and set up joint enterprises.

Biographical sketch

Kenneth David Kaunda was born on April 28, 1924, in the settlement of Lubwa (former Northern Rhodesia) in the family of an African priest, a teacher at the African school attached to the Scottish Presbyterian Mission. His mother was one of the first women teachers in Northern Rhodesia.

He received a secondary education, worked in the Mission school in Lubwa and later became its headmaster.

He began his political activities in 1948. Joined the African National Congress, the sole political party in the country that represented the interests of the Africans. In 1953 became its General Secretary for Northern Rhodesia.

At the end of 1958 he headed a new party – the Zambian African National Congress (ZANC). In March 1959, the party was banned, and Kenneth Kaunda imprisoned. The left wing of the ZANC broke away from the party to form the United National Independence Party (UNIP)which Kaunda headed when he left prison in 1960 and heads it today as the sole party in Zambia.

In December 1962, a coalition government was formed of representatives of two parties – the UNIP and the North Rhodesian ANC, in which for the first time Africans predominated. Kaunda was given the post of Minister for Local Governmnent and Social Welfare. Two years later he became Prime Minister, and since 1964 has been President of Zambia.

Vou provide the technology and techniques, we provide the manpower and raw materials. That would be good both for you and for us. Surely that's an effective way to ensure the repayment of our debts."

Pan-African problems are close to Kaunda's heart, since his country also comes up against them. Zambia has quite a long record of independent development. On the basis of his theory, which he mentioned earlier, in 1968 Kaunda drew up a long-term plan for the country's developoment. As part of the plan, partial nationalization was carried out in copper mining, the key sector of the economy, and steps were taken to abolish the country's dependence on Britain by diversifying Zambia's economic links, chiefly through establishing ties with other Western countries.

A free medical service was introduced, as well as compulsory elementary and secondary schooling. In the mid-eighties, Zambia had to abandon these important gains because of the country's deteriorating economic situation.

Talking to journalists once, Kenneth Kaunda said that the problems of the Zambian economy were due to low prices for copper – its main source of hard currency – and high prices for oil, which the country is forced to import. Copper brings Zambia more than 95 per cent of all the foreign currency she earns. The growth of imports from the developed countries resulted in the industrial sector of the Zambian economy, operating at only 30 per cent its capacity, and the foreign debt topping the 5-billion-dollars mark.

Zambia turned for help to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but the conditions set by the Fund proved totally unacceptable. They would in effect have cancelled out all the gains of the revolution. Last year Zambia refused the IMF's aid. Prices were frozen and a firm exchange rate was fixed for the national currency. The import of luxury goods was forbidden and the prices of prime essentials were reduced. Other measures were also taken to bring order to the economy.

A great deal still remains to be done to rectify the situation. What is important, however, is that Kenneth Kaunda has achieved internal stability in the republic, which for many years was torn by intertribal strife.

"Our motto," he said, "is 'One Zambia – one nation.' There are many of us: white and black, brown and yellow. We have a great many tribes and ethnic groups, and they are all joined together in a single nation on the basis of love and truth."

Kaunda has introduced a one-party system in the country, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), and gradually concentrated all political power in his own hands. I remember attending a reception for journalists on the lawn in front of the Presidential Palace. When the President made his appearance, it became clear that he would have to sit under the direct rays of the scorching African sun. Members of the Cabinet and the CC of the ruling party were situated a short distance away in the shade of some trees. I heard one of his assistants ask:

"Are you comfortable?" Kaunda replied jokingly: "It's all right, I shall stay in the sun. Let the members of the Cabinet stay in the shade."

Kaunda is very good at maintaining tribal balance. There was a time when the tribal strife was concentrated in a conflict between the two biggest tribes of the country – the Bemba and the Lozi.

Using his great personal authority, Kenneth Kaunda resorted to the tactics of making periodic changes in the composition of the CC UNIP, the government and state institutions. These tactics helped nip intertribal strife in the bud.

Soviet-Zambian relations also featured in the interview. There was a time when Kenneth Kaunda equated the Soviet Union with the United States, and advanced the slogan of their equal responsibility for the frenzied arms race, and the immense expenditure of material resources that it involved. In a recent interview the Zambian President called on the Western countries to abandon their old approach of viewing relations with the U.S.S.R. through the prism of East-West confrontation and heed what Gorbachev was proposing in the field of nuclear disarmament.

"Your October revolution means so much to all of mankind," Kaunda said. "But the present, the second revolution led by Gorbachev, means no less. I think many countries and governments who loathe changes will resist it because the Soviet Union's influence is now becoming more than positive. I have no doubt that no reasonable person wants war. But it is precisely the people who create the circumstances that lead to war. People should also be responsible for removing the causes that breed war. When I wrote of that to Gorbachev, congratulating him on the signing of the Washington Accords, I underlined that we in Zambia, like all the people of Africa, want peace. Peace would allow us to develop. In the meantime, even so poor a country as Zambia is forced to spend money on defence, because a threat of war emanates from South Africa. This money should be spent on developing the economy and eradicating poverty.

"I believe," President Kaunda said in conclusion, "that the elimination of the threat of war depends on specific personalities. That is what Mikhail Gorbachev is working on. And we must help him. I have told my colleagues in the West that they could promote this. Just give Gorbachev the chance to test what he proposes in practice: let's see whether it works, whether or not it's realistic. We in the OAU for our part, have adopted a resolution proclaiming Africa a nuclear-free zone. For us, this resolution has become a guide for action."

The interview ended most unexpectedly. Kenneth Kaunda walked up to the piano, sat down and, accompanying himself, began to sing.

He sang a song of peace.

Taking leave of the President, I asked what he would like to wish the readers of New Times and the Soviet people. He replied:

"We in Zambia support perestroika and the policy of openness. You are following the course set by the October revolution, which changed the world. Today you are carrying out another revolution. That sets an example for us and the whole world, showing that the potential of socialism is truly boundless."

Human interest traits

Kaunda reads a lot, writes, likes music and is a good dancer. He enjoys golf and hunting, plays table tennis and draughts.

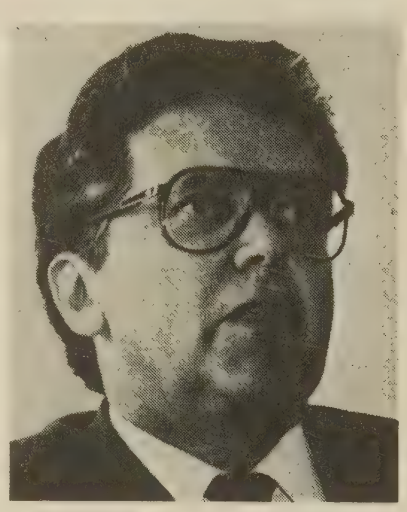
He has a fine library. It includes the books of ancient Chinese philosophers, the works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and the collected works of Lenin. On the President's desk lies a copy of Mikhail Gorbachev's "Perestroika: new thinking for our country and the world."

On his official portraits Kenneth Kaunda wears the toga of an African chieftain. It was sewn especially for him by Lithuanian craftsmen.

Kenneth Kaunda never drinks alcohol and does not keep it in his house. He doesn't even drink strong tea or coffee, preferring natural juices. He is a vegetarian.

Peace be with you, Africa!

Anatoly Adamishin, U.S.S.R. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, is interviewed by a New Times correspondent.



Soviet foreign policy is now believed, with good reason, to be more dynamic. Does this apply to the sphere of Soviet-African relations?

The Soviet Union's relations with African states, and our cooperation with newly independent nations in general, has always been distinguished by at least two fundamental characteristics: first, solidarity with, and support for, peoples in their struggle for national liberation (in present-day terms, in their efforts to abolish the last bastion of colonialism, the apartheid regime in South Africa). In other words, the U.S.S.R. has always been and remains on the Africans' side in their fight for national and, later, social and economic liberation. From this viewpoint, Soviet policy towards African countries is consistent, and will certainly remain so. Second, we seek, as consistently, to have the friendly possible relations with all African states, the OAU member-countries in particular – provided, of course, that the countries in question are similarly inclined. The U.S.S.R. has its loyal friends in Africa. These are the states we have signed treaties on friendship and cooperation with, such as Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique. We make no secret of the fact that our special sympathies lie with the countries which have embarked upon the road of progressive domestic reforms and an independent foreign policy. At the same time, the Soviet Union is prepared to establish good, mutually beneficial relations with the countries which prefer the capitalist order of things patterned on the Western model. Here is an example: although the U.S.S.R. has no diplomatic relations with N'Djamena, we regularly award Chadian students scholarships to Soviet higher schools. Diplomatic relations with Cote d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic have recently been restored on the initiative of those countries.

All these are constants of our policy. Perestroika has had an envigorating effect on our foreign policy – as on our life as a whole – making it increasingly active, realistic and closely bound up with the interests of our national economy. We seek to make our political cooperation with African countries more dynamic. More African statesmen visit the Soviet Union, and Soviet representatives go to Africa more frequently. Political communication, political contacts, political cooperation, emphasis on problems of real concern to all nations across the world – all these are the signs of the times. It often happens that African and other developing countries tend to delegate the solution of major problems to the two great powers. On the one hand, the African countries' political self-awareness is growing; they realize that their voice carries far in the modern world, that the problem of development – the most acute one facing the newly-independent nations – will remain almost insoluble unless the arms race is stopped; otherwise, where is the money to come from? This does not rule out the possiblity of scrapping together some extra funds. However, it is impossible to remedy the situation and sharply increase the aid so many countries so badly need without channelling the enormous sums now being spent on the arms buildup into development. This is why our programme of action, "disarmament for development," is finding an increasingly significant following in Africa. The same is true of the proposal submitted to the United Nations by socialist countries to form, through joint efforts, a system of universal peace and international security. It is no accident that one of the African countries, Tanzania, is a member of the Six – a group of countries which enjoy considerable international prestige. Another African country, Zimbabwe, now leads the large and influential non-aligned movement. So much for political problems.

As for foreign debt and other economic problems, which haven't until recently been given adequate study, we have now suggested workable schemes for solving them which, incidentally, have many points in common with the demands made by developing countries. These are no mere slogans, mind you, and can really be put into practice today for the benefit of all. Notably, we are often suspected of trying to oust the Western powers from Africa, undermine their ties with their former colonies, and so on. We disprove these assertions by our statements and practical actions. Relations which have evolved over decades and even centuries cannot be changed overnight. The U.S.S.R. has no intention of damaging these relations. Why should it? On the other hand, we are convinced that these relations ought to be harmonious rather than resembling, as is often the case, those between robbers and their victims. An end must be put to this practice,

which could land short-sighted and mercenary politicians in serious trouble.

In our bilateral economic relations with African and other developing countries, we now seek to be "down to earth" and realistic, avoid wishful thinking, to do business thriftily; what we want is maximum efficiency, with economic, scientific, technical, cultural and other kinds of cooperation being of immediate benefit to all sides. Problems still abound in this sphere, but it is hardly an exaggeration to say that we are becoming more proficient in our policy-making, and are gaining expertise in these difficult matters, trying to take local conditions into account instead of applying our own yardsticks to them. These are only general remarks, as our specific relations with African countries are naturally extremely varied.

You have visited the "frontline states" in the south of Africa on many occasions. What's the situation like in the region today?

The aggression being perpetrated for many years by South Africa against the neighbouring states is one of the most salient components of the current political situation on the continent. Apartheid has transcended the confines of South Africa and become an international problem. An end must be put to this phenomenon, which is a disgrace to the entire international community. As a result of international efforts – and chiefly those of the South African population – the racialist state must be replaced by a democracy which would take the interests of all sections of the public into account and end arbitrary rule. The aggressive actions taken by South Africa against the neighbouring states often take the form of defiance. It is hard to recall a precedent for a head of state crossing the border to inspect his troops illegally deployed on the territory of another sovereign state, with which his country, incidentally, maintains relations formalized by certain documents (I mean the Lusaka accords). What we have here is obviously an open war led by South Africa against the lawful government of Angola. At the same time, South Africa renders every support to the UNITA grouping, which is fighting, and committing acts of sabotage against the government in Luanda, and causing massive loss of life, destruction and suffering to a potentially rich African country. It is now perfectly clear that UNITA is an extension of South Africa's war machine, and that but for Pretoria's support and the aid rendered to it by the United States in violation of international law, the Angolans would long ago have settled matters on their own.

One cannot say that South Africa's aggression left the Security Council cold; on the contrary, it unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the actions of South Africa and demanded the withdrawal of its troops from Angolan territory. However, Pretoria demonstrated its total disregard for the international community's demand. It was necessary to go further and impose sanctions on South Africa for failure to comply with the resolution. Ironically, the Western very countries that lose no time in applying sanctions against states whose policy is not to their liking (Poland, for instance), have not lifted a finger to sanction South Africa out of Namibia, which it has been unlawfully occupying for decades.

The Soviet Union favours a political settlement of the situation in the south of Africa. The frontline states and the national liberation movements want the same thing. It is now up to the other side to change its policy. It looks as if a trend towards political settlement is emerging in the region. The U.S.S.R. welcomes this trend. The first contact has been made between Angola and Cuba, on the one hand, and South Africa, on the other, through the mediation of the United States (although some say, not without grounds, that the U.S. has not always been unbiased). On the whole, this contact is a positive development. If a fair and well-balanced settlement is arrived at, it will be welcomed by all who want peace and tranquility in the region and insist on respect for the lawful rights of all nations.

The U.S.S.R. pursues no special interests there. I am sure that a settlement acceptable to our friends – Angola and Cuba – will suit us, too.

The stand to be taken by South Africa remains obscure, however. Pretoria has not yet made up its mind, I think, about whether to continue to rely on force and persist in its racial arrogance, or seek reasonable compromises.

Africa is an arena of many fierce regional conflicts, such as that between Somalia and Ethiopia. A settlement of this conflict seems now to be in the offing. What is our stand on the matter?

The Soviet Union regards it as good news that the two neighbours in the Horn of Africa have restored diplomatic relations. While in Addis Ababa and Mogadishu recently, I congratulated the leaders of those countries, on the Soviet government's behalf, upon the agreement they had reached. The important thing now is to observe it, keep the normalization process going and secure it against outside interference.

Common sense and political realism have triumphed. Military confrontation took too much of the effort and resources so badly needed for the development of the region. It has now become possible to eradicate age-old hostility and pool efforts in combatting the famine, drought and other calamities threatening the nations of the Horn of Africa. I believe the settlement of the Somalian-Ethiopian conflict to be a good example to follow, not only for that region – for Ethiopia and the Sudan, especially – but for other hot spots on the continent. Such conflicts ought to be settled in the spirit of new thinking, in keeping with the principles and the Charter of the Organization of African Unity.

The OAU is marking its 25th anniversary. How would you comment on the results of this organization's work over the past quarter of a century?

The Organization of African Unity has firmly established itself as an authoritative and important international forum.

The OAU is working for a new and just economic order, for the genuine independence of African countries, for peace and disarmament, and against racism and apartheid. The OAU has been instrumental in resolving many major international problems and building up a climate of confidence and cooperation. In a situation where hotbeds of tension still exist on the continent, the OAU has repeatedly acted as a mediator. The OAU's peace-making efforts will, I am sure, have a crucial role to play in settling disputes and conflicts in that part of the world in the future as well. In this, the Organization of African Unity can always rely on understanding and support on the part of the Soviet Union.

Interviewer:
ALEXEI BUKALOV

People and bullets

An anatomy of political violence which has become a fact of life in Northern Ireland

"So, the lad who offered me a plastic bullet yesterday was mistaken?"

"You mean in saying that there would be no clashes?" laughs Billy Bittles. "He was right. There was no clash. When it got dark a crowd gathered, and they started chucking stones at policemen, and then a few grenades were thrown. The army moved in and by two in the morning it was all over. The soldiers stayed behind to clear away the stones and broken glass... It happens all the time. Newspapers don't bother to report it – it's not interesting. It's become part of our lives.

No Solomon Isles

My young but wordly-wise guide Billy takes me to the Falls Road, one of the central streets in Belfast's Catholic quarter. "See those splinters on the pavement? There was a fight here during the night," he had said a few minutes earlier, and that was what had provoked my question.

At the start of our long walks about Belfast, when he unleashed all the gruesome stories on me and showed me visual proof of them, I still had a sneaking suspicion that it was something out of Jack London's story about "the terrible Solomons." It is a story about an adventure-seeker who is presented with an elaborate put-up show with faked explosions, clashes with bloodthirsty aborigines and other trappings of "dangerous living" on a Pacific island. Before long, however, I had to reject that involuntary association. I felt ashamed of even suspecting him of exaggerating. The fact that what I saw was too horrible to be true was a poor justification for my initial disbelief.

We went to the Falls Road to meet members of a Catholic family at the headquarters of the Sinn Fein party. Billy said the meeting had been difficult to arrange: times were dangerous even by local standards, and no one was keen to meet a journalist – one could easily become the target of gunmen. We reached our destination. There was a short exchange over the intercom and the door opened just wide enough to let us in. The man asked us more questions to make sure of our identity. He sat down in front of a screen showing part of the street before the building. A moment before my guide and I had appeared on that screen. We sat down and waited patiently. We were aware of intense activity inside the building. Through a glass door we saw a narrow staircase with people rushing up and down it.

"Look, it's Gerry himself," whispered Billy. I glimpsed the profile of the famous Gerry Adams, leader of the political organization that unites much of the Catholic population. Its military arm is the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

After about ten minutes I asked Billy if he would find out when we would be received.

"Don't ask any questions," he mouthed in reply.

A burly fair-headed lad in faded jeans entered the room and sat down on a chair in front of us. His head drooped as if he were about to take a nap. People continued to scurry up and down the staircase behind the glass door. No one seemed to pay any attention to us. Through a chink in the door to my left a quiet voice was heard. The drowsy lad sprang from his chairin response.

The normally talkative Billy was silent. Trusting his experience, I stopped pestering him with questions. I passed the time by watching the passersby on the screen. At last we were shown up the steep narrow staircase into a small room. All it contained were a few armchairs.

We were told that the planned meeting would not after all take place and that instead we would be allowed to interview Richard McAuley, an official spokesman for Sinn Fein. He is about 35, has a neatly trimmed fair moustache and his eyes peer out attentively from behind his spectacles. He speaks English with barely a trace of the local accent, which makes the speech of many local people incomprehensible to a stranger.

Shooting in Gibraltar

"The present crisis began with the British executing three Republicans in Gibraltar," he says.

McAuley uses the word "executed" and not "killed" or "shot dead" advisedly. It accurately describes the actions of the agents of the British secret services who had tracked down three members of the Irish Republican Army – Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Danny McCann – and shot them at almost point-blank range. During the parliamentary debates Geoffrey Howe and Margaret Thatcher hastened to justify the brutal and dubious actions of the latter-day James Bonds by claiming that they thought their lives were in danger. Besides, a 500-lb bomb had allegedly been found in a car parked nearby. It was established that the three Northern Irishmen did not threaten the armed agents because they were unarmed. And the bomb too proved to be either a mirage or a smoke screen behind which the cold-blooded murderers and those who gave them orders tried to hide.

Eyewitnesses said that two of the Irishmen were shot in the back, without warning, by a man in plain clothes who got away in a police car, and the third was shot while trying to escape from the scene of the massacre. Labour MP Eric Heffer tried to pin down the organizers of the massacre by asking why, if the three murdered men were, as has been reported, under the surveillance of the British secret services, they weren't simply arrested. And if the supermen from the secret services did feel their lives to be threatened, why didn't they shoot the Irish in the legs? They are reputed to be fine marksmen who can hit a 50-pence coin from a distance of 50 yards. This latter argument comes drom the speech of Peter Barry, a prominent public figure in the Irish republic.

"Because of the circumstances in which it happened, the disinformation which the British gave after the executions, many people, in this area particularly, were extremely angry," McAuley continues. "Young people went out onto the streets, and hijacked and burned vehicles. We succeeded in controlling that situation and preventing it from escalating. We were then, and still are, opposed to young people going out into the streets and getting involved (mostly young people take part in the disturbances because they can run faster). All they succeed in doing is increasing the hardship and suffering that people have to put up with. They only hurt our own people."

"How did events develop afterwards?"

"When the remains of the three volun-

Continued from issue No. 16, 1988

teers arrived, we all knew that the funeral would be very large and well attended and we believed the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) and the British government realized that as well. The RUC and the British Army, on orders from the Tory government, decided not to engage, not to use the tactics they had been using at Republican funerals. In recent years all Republican funerals have had large numbers of British Army and RUC personnel. On many occasions physical confrontation, fighting, has broken out between mourners and the RUC, as the RUC had attempted to take the funerals over, surround the hearse, surround the coffin and direct the proceedings. That had resulted in a considerable amount of bad publicity for the RUC and the British Army.

"I think they realized that the funerals would be extremely large. They also realized there would be a huge international press corps, and that that would be bad for their image. So, they consciously took the decision to remain aloof from that situation. We believe elements within the police tipped off the Loyalists allowing them to mount their attack at the cemetery."

Coincidence or collusion?

I've seen the TV report several times. The opening frames were dominated by the green of the grass in the cemetery and the green part of the green and white orange flags and ribbons on the wreaths. Then the screen was invaded by the red of the blood on people's faces. The most abhorrent fact was that the barbaric attack was launched at the moment when the coffin was being lowered into the grave. I couldn't help mentally congratulating the British cameramen on their competence and courage as they continued filming, with grenades exploding and shots being fired all around them. Three people were killed and more than fifty injured. Several days later I went to the Belfast cemetery: I stood in the places where grenades had gone off and bullets had whined, and on the spot where the crowd caught the terrorist, a Loyalist by the name of Stone.

"It's impossible to believe it was a coincidence," McAuley went on, "that for the first time in 10 years there was no one from the British Army or the RUC at a Republican funeral. Suddenly this Loyalist gunman, with an associate who escaped, attacks a Republican funeral. The two guns found were a Browning and a Lüger. In all the pictures and photographs the weapon he had in his hand was a Browning. The man obviously knew how to use guns and used them well. If the gun had not jammed, more people would've been killed...

"We find it impossible to believe that there was not some form of collusion between at least some elements of the RUC and the group responsible for the attack. The RUC and the British Army could see clearly what was happening at the cemetery: there were two British Army helicopters immediately overhead, and there is an observation post at the top of the watchtower. The RUC have now admitted that a white Ford van, which was parked on the motorway until a short time before the gunman left the cemetery, contained RUC people. Even so, it took the British Army and the RUC 15 minutes to respond to the attack. If the young people – and some not so young – had not caught him, he would have escaped."

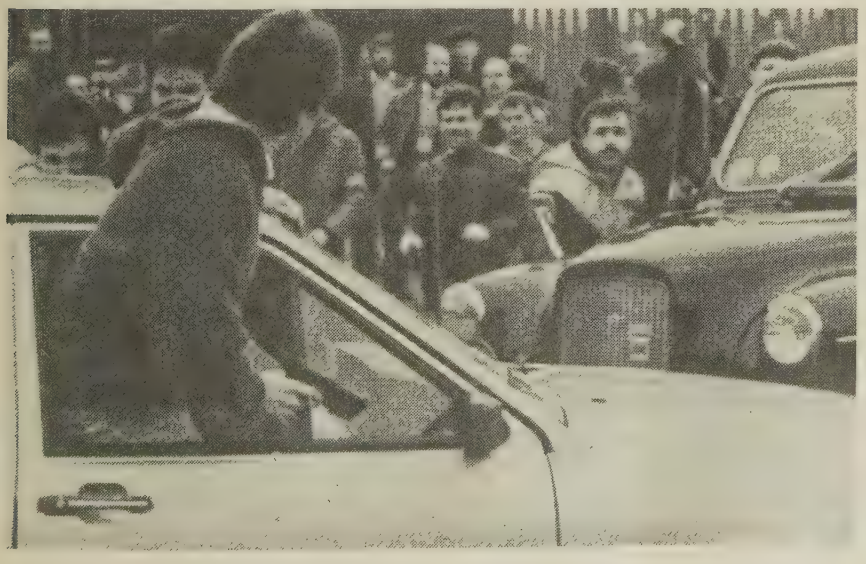
"In West Belfast," said McAuley, "if the IRA attack a British Army or RUC patrol, the area is sealed off within 2-3 minutes and swamped by troops. So there are sufficient facts to prove that there was collusion."

Another coincidence?

"Three days later," he went on, "two British soldiers were killed. The car in which the two British soldiers were travelling was driving at a speed of – according to journalists – about 40 miles an hour. It drove onto the footpath, along the footpath, almost knocking several people down, including women with children. All this happened close to the funeral of one of the victims of the attack on the cemetery. The drivers caused alarm and attracted the attention of those attending the funeral. But initially there was nothing to suggest there was anything to be afraid of – there were no guns, no hand grenades. But once the gun was out, everybody believed, including the press, that they were Loyalists – and that was when the crowd went mad in the belief that if they didn't get those two characters out of that car, people were going to be killed. Tom King, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said in reply to a question in the British House of Commons that the information given to the senior RUC and British Army officers on the ground from the army helicopter led them to believe initially that this was a further bomb attack on the funeral. And if the journalists and priests saw it and believed it was a bomb attack, then it's reasonable to assume that the people also believed it was a further bomb attack, and they reacted in exactly the same way as the young people had reacted on Wednesday."

"But on Wednesday," said McAuley, "because the character who was captured was a Loyalist, they were all described as heroes. Because subsequently it turned out that these young British soldiers, the British media presented it as a Lynch mob... We don't know why these two were there. The British Army claim that it was a mistake, that they were on their way to the barracks. If they were on their way to their barracks, they had taken a very bad route. They were going into an area where, they had been told in advance, a Republican funeral was taking place. They had ample opportunity to reverse, or do a U-turn on the road when they saw the funeral ahead of them. Instead they drove into the funeral.

"There are two conflicting stories. Some say they saw a gun as the car drove up. In a situation like that people's recollection of what had happened can be confusing. There is no doubt though that after the car reversed onto the main road and the crowd surrounded it, several ste-



The plainclothsman with a gun turned out to be a British soldier.

wards were beginning to calm the crowd when there were shouts of there being a gun or something. The driver then produced the second gun – both weapons were Brownings – most people in West Belfast are really familiar with weapons. The Browning is a standard British Army weapon. But Loyalist groups had recently lost two large shipments of weapons that had been captured by the RUC and the British Army. So, I can only presume that when he produced the gun they believed he was a Loyalist... The two characters, if you look at photographs, don't have British Army haircuts. They have reasonably long hair. So, people genuinely believed that the two men were Loyalists...

"They fired a shot from the car. So, people dragged the two men from the car. Their reaction was to kick them out of the road so that the funeral could continue. We are not going to allow attacks on our funerals, prevent us from burying our dead."

McAuley was silent for a second, then continued:

"At what stage it was realized that they were British soldiers I don't know. At some stage an IRA man appeared who took control of the situation. He took them away and shot them in the belief, I am convinced, that they were soldiers engaged in an undercover operation, probably aimed at attacking the Republicans at the funeral."

"What lessons can be drawn from the dramatic events over the last two weeks?"

"There are a lot of lessons to be drawn. But I think the most important lesson is that for us as Republicans the violence we have seen derives from the British presence in our country. As long as the British presence remains in Ireland, the political violence, political instability that have been a fact of life here for decades, will continue. And it only reinforces our view that there cannot be peaceful development if the British presence remains.

"There are two main possibilities if the British leave. One is that the Loyalist threat of a violent reaction will be carried out. The second is that a violent reaction isn't going to do them any good at all. When they realize that their umbilical cord with Britain has been cut,Loyalists will be prepared to sit down and negotiate."

"And what if violence breaks out when the British go?"

"There is a possibility of that. That's our problem, that's for us as Irishmen to sort our ourselves. It isn't a justification for the British to remain. The British have no right to be in Ireland. Their presence makes generation after generation of Irish people take up arms against the British. It perpetuates political instability. They have to go and allow us to determine our own future for ourselves. If, at the end of the day, we want to knock each other's heads off, or shoot each other, or sit down and talk and try to live together – that's our problem, and it's for us to resolve. It isn't for anybody else to dictate to us how we should live. What we are arguing for primarily is the right of Irish people to national self-determination.

The aim is to create a state, a united Ireland. What form that united Ireland will take is something that would have to be determined by negotiation and discussion amongst all the political organizations and parties existing within Ireland. When the British have gone, we shall try and build a political party that will cater for the needs of the Irish working class. Unfortunately, that's not going to happen while the British presence remains, and while there is partition. These factors distort politics in the North..."

What happened in Northolt

On the same day and at about the same time two planes left Belfast for London.

One was a British Airways passenger Boeing, which was taking its small consignment of passengers to Heathrow Airport. There are fewer passengers in the daytime, so the fares are 50 per cent less than on the morning and evening flights. There is a discount on all flights between London and other major cities in the United Kingdom. In Belfast passengers are told to arrive not a quarter of an hour but half an hour before departure time. The extra time is needed to frisk the passengers and X-ray their luggage.

As they go through the telescopic chute passengers arriving from Belfast have at one point to walk in single file between two posts where a couple of gentlemen openly scrutinize them as they squeeze through the obstacles... Among the arrivals on the daytime flight was your New Times correspondent who fortunately bore no resemblance to any of the suspected or wanted people. Having safely reached his hotel, he switched on the TV to watch the arrival of another plane.

A Royal Air Force transport plane had brought the bodies of two British corporals killed in Ulster. They were the ones who had been driving dangerously close to the funeral procession in a car, from which one of them had fired a shot.

The plane, which landed at Northolt Air Base, was met at the highest level: by the Prime Minister herself, looking as elegant as ever in a dark suit and black hat.

Death is always a tragedy. You cannot help being affected by the tears in the eyes of the victims' relatives. And yet, and yet... Soldiers who died under confused, if not mysterious, circumstances treated as martyrs?

What about the grief of the relatives of those people from Ulster killed by the bullets of the RUC and the British Army or by terrorist bombs?

The scene at the Royal Air Force base was more than giving honours to the "fallen heroes." It was reaffirmation of London's policy in Northern Ireland. Politicians committed to resolving the age-old problem by force. Politicians who foster the evil flower of violence which has blossomed in Northern Ireland.

The roots of that "flower" provide the subject for a separate article.

VLADIMIR ZHITOMIRSKY,
our special correspondent
Photo from Time magazine
Belfast – Moscow

Children in a city

They live near us, yet apart from us. They live without our love, help, or attention. They are feared, despised, jailed or even killed. Adults do not understand them and they consider adults their enemies. They are to be seen everywhere, in industrialized and developing nations alike. One sees them in Bangkok, Paris, New York, and Brasilia, but it seems they all live in one huge city, where everyone is an enemy....

They spend the daylight hours looking for something to eat, a place to stay for the night, or perhaps a friend. They are terribly lonely, having been pushed out onto the street from some sort of home somewhere. It is impossible to survive in the street if you are alone, and they get together to form gangs or maybe communes. They never lose hope of earning some money. They shine shoes, wipe the dust off cars, unload delivery vans, or peddle all kinds of junk. If nobody wants their service, they steal. There are always quite a few of them near bus and rail terminals, supermarkets and shopping arcades where they can subsist and find a place to sleep at night. Where do they all come from?

Their life stories follow the same pattern. They come from single-parent families, they ran away from home, they had problems at school, they got on the wrong side of the law at least once, they tried drugs, and now they are trying to survive at the bottom of the social scale.

The other side of fear

The dimension of their living space is equal to the breadth of the street, a notion that also includes urban wasteland and abandoned housing estates. That is their habitat. They are described variously by social workers – as children without families, unattached children, and children in need of care and protection. The U.N. Commission on Human Rights calls them street children. Nobody knows how many of them there are in the world.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund, there are more than 30 million of them. According to a 1986 report of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, that is a very approximate figure. Governments seem to be unable to say how many children exactly live in the streets in their countries. Sociologists refer to the lack of appropriate definitions of waifs and strays. They say there are no surveys that delineate the boundaries of the phenomenon. Mexico is believed to have 200 thousand abandoned children and Argentina, 300 thousand. There are 20 thousand of them in New York alone. Rapid urbanization in the developing countries brings more and more people unable to cope in an urban environment to the cities. In the industrialized nations high unemployment, broken families, housing problems, urban poverty, high divorce rates, and fear of the urban environment combine to account for the growing number of homeless children, according to U.N. Commission on Human Rights' experts concerned with children.

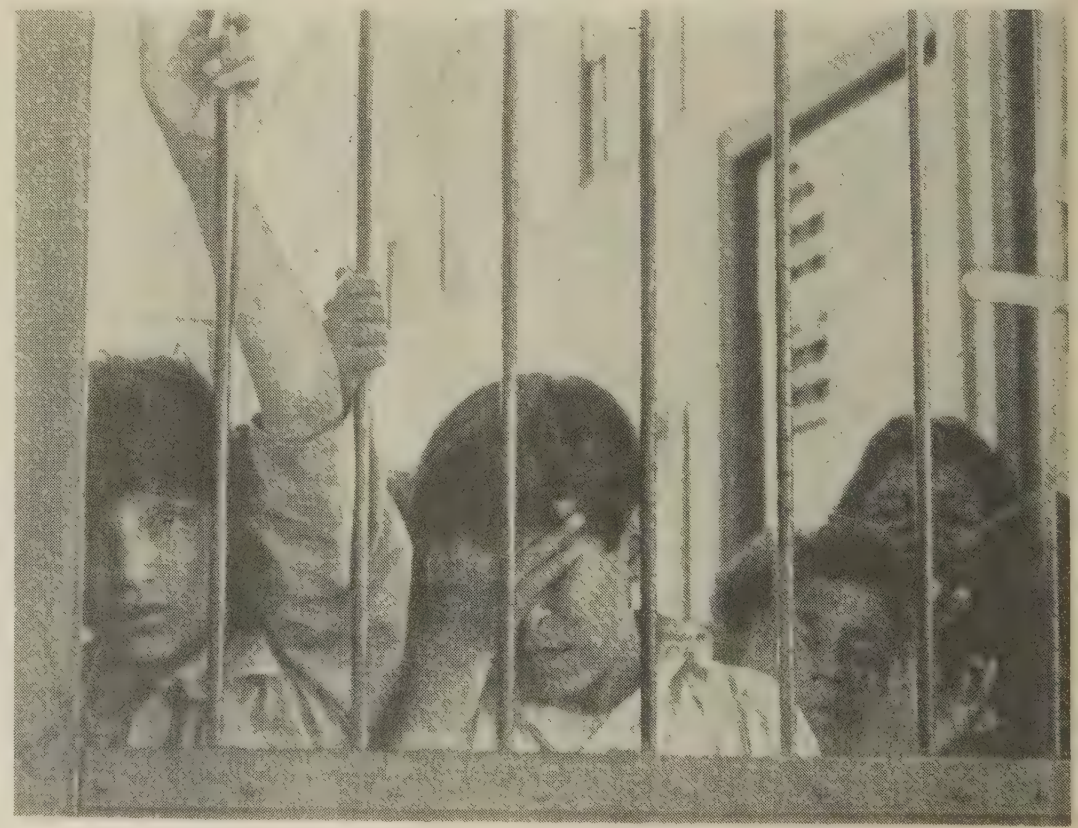
The street is a world in its own right. It blocks off the past and calls the future into question. The street belongs to all and to none. There is a different system of values here, centred on physical strength. The consequence is constant fear of the cruelty of those around, disease, the police, and jail. The other side of fear is violence against passersby. Violence against the other is the consequence of violence inflicted upon the self.

Street people, or many of them at least, nevertheless regard their life as normal. Some say that they are even relieved to live in the street after all the trouble they have seen. On a clue from them, some writers tend to romanticize the street. Street slang, the unwritten ethic, and reckless ways of living seem to offer an illusive alternative to the philistine ways of the establishment.

The trouble is that sometimes gangsterism is romanticized. Looking for protection, street kids are often manipulated by seasoned criminals. In recent years, juvenile gangs have formed drug mafias. Juveniles arouse less suspicion on the part of the police, and even if they are caught they are likely to get a more lenient sentence.

What kind of children end up in the street? A broken family does not necessarily oust a child into the street. Some psychologists tend to believe that certain personality traits are crucial here and among them a desire to be independent and lead an active social life. Examinations of street children have not revealed mental disorders in them, on the contrary, street children tend to have strong characters and readily adapt to street life.

The decision to live in the street is not always a conscious one. In the United States, a quarter of all households is accounted for by single-parent families. The situation is even worse in the developing countries. Sometimes children have never met their fathers, or haven't seen much of them before they divorced their mothers, or were, say, imprisoned, taken ill, etc. Most frequently this happens against a background of unemployment,



alcohol abuse, and a total loss of confidence in oneself. The frustrations accumulating within families are taken out on the children, at times in the form of child battering. Physical, psychological and emotional pressures destroy the very notion of the "home." Members of a family become alienated and estranged. The age and dependent position of children are not taken into account. Children are required to "contribute equally," that is to obtain food and money by any means. The options are: to get the money by hook or by crook; to fail to do so – and get beaten up; or to stay away from home. More often than not, the kids prefer the latter.

Inhuman megalopolises

Modern society does not give a single mother suitable material conditions for bringing up children. A working mother torn between her career and her home, or a jobless mother equally lose composure and confidence in their ability, and prove unable to provide a child with emotional protection.

Schools called upon to help a child become an equal member of society very often fail to perform that duty. In the developing countries, schools tend to be geared to a middle-class model of education with the inherent system of values centred on higher education.

Inculcated in schoolchildren is respect for occupations requiring a college diploma, and contempt for the jobless. Those who cannot count on getting a diploma and who know what unemployment is at first hand feel excluded from their class and regard the effort to learn anything as pointless. They look for refuge in the street.

The city, the sprawling metropolis of today, does not appear to be the best human habitat. Recent rural dwellers feel this most painfully. In rural communities, children are brought up collectively and a mother can always find someone to take care of her child for a while. A large number of children is not perceived as a burden, but rather as the best way of insuring oneself against old age, and more so since every pair of hands is needed in the fields.

In the city, children immediately increase the financial burden of a family. Books and other things have to be bought to send them to school. The family, which includes grandchildren and grandparents, breaks down and the children become wholly dependent on their parents. They may have a very poor run of luck. Clashes occur between conventional values and those acquired in the city. A child is unable to satisfy needs generated by urban living and feels confused, helpless and embittered as a result. It is all different in the street: everyone is equal here and everybody must begin from scratch.

The city is not friendly to children in the industrialized countries too. The current trend of urban planning produces inhuman megalopolises, often described as "concrete jungle," which alienate human beings from the urban environment. One can assume from the rapid rate of urbanization that people congregate in cities because it is their nature to live in "herds," but that is an erroneous conclusion. Urban living disrupts rather than heals human relationships and atomizes the human community.

The problem of homeless children has not assumed such a dimension in the Soviet Union, but many children live in orphanages in spite of the fact that their parents are alive. The divorce rate is not declining. Before that tragic problem spreads in this country, we must think of ways of preventing it.

What has been done can be undone

The city and its streets need humanization. Industrial and housing construction must not enjoy priority over everything else in urban planning, or the street will continue to have a negative influence on children. The right of children to a place for play is violated by planners, who see the street only as a channel for the traffic. The street can have a positive cultural influence on children if it is the centre of social and cultural life in a neighbourhood and if it has sports facilities. Building play and sports grounds does not require much spending. Street entertainment in the form of music, dancing, arts and handicrafts exhibitions, and street theatre requires traditions. Restructuring urban life will make it possible to reveal all the best there is in children of the street. Many of them have talent and ability that seek expression. After all, the soccer king Pele spent his childhood in the street.

Urban planners cannot of course resolve the problem on their own. The problem requires efforts by one and all. According to the International Catholic Child Bureau, which set up the Geneva Centre for Nongovernmental Programmes on Street Children and Street Youth in 1982, there are at least 150 programmes under way around the world to make the lot of street children better, but there is still nothing like the family. A radical solution would be to resolve all the socio-economic problems that gave rise to the phenomenon, but one can hardly expect that to happen.

In the meantime, any effort and assistance will come in useful. A package of emergency measures was proposed by the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, which acts in keeping with U.N. General Assembly resolutions. Its recommendations are worth discussing with respect to our own problems. Above all, governments must become aware of the scale of the problem and allocate appropriate funds, the commission points out. Local governments should concentrate on helping weak families, that is single-parent families or families with an unemployed breadwinner. Welfare bodies should be able to intervene before a family breaks down. Street children are within easy reach of crime, they are not criminals, but they may become criminals if society fails to do anything for them.

Possibilities for adoption must be expanded. Single and aged people must not be ruled out as potential foster parents. Families that have found the going hard, but have nevertheless survived must be first in line as foster parents.

The system of social welfare is geared above all to helping the lonely, aged and sick, while it often disregards what are considered to be well-off families. This must be reviewed, because families that are doing well today may break down tomorrow unless they are helped.

The main thing is to find an occupation for street children. Like the rest of us they need food and shelter, but recognizing their value as individuals is no less important, and that covers their thirst for adventure. In the words of John Steinbeck, "a boy becomes a man when a man is needed."

Charities are among the agencies that care for street children. The Salvation Army was formed in 1878 with the express purpose of helping the homeless. Regrettably, children do not get as much care as they should. Their lot is made worse partly by the fact that their demeanor, life style and behavior arouse less sympathy than those of the old and sick. They appear to be cruel, aggressive, ungrateful and in general unbearable. The unfortunate young human being must be discerned behind that façade.

Dedicating one's life to street children is of course a good deed, and pepole who have done so are respected. There is a negative aspect to this, however. Faced with these charismatic figures we tend to underestimate ourselves and discard our own chances of extending help or contributing to their effort. Professionals can of course do better than anyone else faced with the same problem, but here professionals alone are not likely to succeed. Less charismatic citizens can help. After all, children have been pushed into the street by that which we have destroyed rather than by natural calamities, and what has been done can be undone.

LEONID MLECHIN

Photos from the report of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues

Geneva - Moscow

Our special responsibility

Vitaly Ignatenko

On May 7, General Secretary Gorbachev met with leaders of the Soviet mass media, ideological institutions and art workers' associations. It was the fifth meeting of its kind. Already an annual event, these meetings always hold new promise and bear no trace of stiff-necked overorganizing. They offer those present an opportunity to analyze information obtained at first hand from the most authoritative source and to be present at the inception of optimal assessments... Mikhail Gorbachev emphasized their importance for the Party's Central Committee. It is equally vital for the leaders of our press and art workers' associations to compare notes and approaches. The productiveness of such feedback, of this intellectual interaction with our Party leaders is steadily growing, hence the spirit of lively and concerned dialogue that reigns at such encounters. Incidentally, this time the meeting lasted almost all day.

Speaking of the need to restore socialism's revolutionary substance and historical promise, and sharing his reflections on the need to identify socialist criteria, the CPSU leader's outline of the scope for responsibility was not aimed solely at us newsmen or ideological workers in the run-up to the impending 19th CPSU conference. We felt that it is a priority facing the Party and society as a whole. "We should... once and for all discard the notion of socialism as allegedly leveling out and overlooking the individual; of it being a sort of institutionalized minimum – the minimum of the good things of life, the minimum of justice, the minimum of democracy," he said. The meeting at the CPSU Central Committee has shown that society and the Party have applied themselves to practical preparations for the conference. As one speaker put it, the first stone on the road to the conference was laid immediately after the 27th Congress completed its deliberations.

Promoting perestroika

And now to the tasks facing the conference. Several times – in the dialogue with the participants, when amplifying or pinpointing their ideas – Mikhail Gorbachev reiterated that the conference should give a thorough analysis and a powerful new impetus to the progress of perestroika. It is called upon to create the political, ideological and organizational preconditions for making perestroika and democratization irreversible, as well as for radically promoting and intensifying these processes.

Our society has to grow in complexity and variety but it will remain socialist, based firmly on the principles of social justice, comradeship and internationalism.

We shall all remember the call to reinvigorate the true, magnificent meaning of the word "comrade" and consolidate the spirit of comradeship in the Party and society.

And when, late in the evening, with the impressions still fresh and the details still vivid in your memory, you share them, off the cuff, with your colleagues, you realize that what is needed is to probe deeper into where and what your work lacks in depth, scope, and effort.

There is no denying that our weekly has changed much. New and costly printing equipment has been acquired. And, most importantly, we give more coverage to our country's domestic affairs. In this, we had to begin practically from scratch, to strike out a new line for ourselves; that required a psychological perestroika, and learning pure and simple. Whether we have succeeded is for the reader to judge.

Delving into our country's domestic problems, dissecting the perestroika process, one cannot fail to see how closely they are linked to the international situation, and the difficult and pressing problems of renewal in the world community. And whenever we can show that convincingly, our readers' response is not found wanting. People voice their views without beating about the bush, they argue heatedly, and help us with their ideas and support. True, at times they protest and vigorously condemn things they don't approve of. The number of letters we receive has more than tripled, but, most importantly, our mailbag has assumed a qualitatively new character. Readers see, and profoundly appreciate and respond to the organic link between the words and actions of the Soviet leadership, which have created a new moral climate at home, and, in the international arena, have made for progress towards a safer world.

At the May 7 meeting, Mikhail Gorbachev emphasized: "Perestroika has become a reality. It has given access to the great potential of socialism, and presented our country, the nation and the Party, in a new light. The 'enemy image,' that cornerstone of ideological warfare against the Soviet Union, against our domestic and foreign policies, is crumbling. We have evolved a vigorous foreign policy based on new thinking and inviting everybody to cooperate."

Let us turn to another aspect of the intertwining of our domestic and foreign affairs. It must be admitted that so far our mass media, New Times included, have not thrown enough light on the work of various agencies and institutions directly responsible for our ties with other countries. Much that is new and useful is being born here, but there is still much inertia and routine which cause things to stall.

In dealing with domestic problems, our magazine has naturally touched upon outstanding events in our history. It should be said in this connection that readers warn us newsmen not to tip the balance between our coverage of the history of our Party and state and our coverage of – or just clever propaganda for – the latest CPSU documents, embodying as they do, the very strategy of perestroika. We have not as yet done enough to elucidate the intellectual platform of perestroika, its lofty moral and humanistic ideals. And that is probably the main task before us today.

That is the message of the meeting at the Central Committee.

Burgeoning hopes

Anatoly Ivashchenko

For ten years in succession the weather was not good to our farmers: either winter brought severe frosts and little snow, or spring came late without February and March thaws; there were terrible summer droughts when ears of wheat drooped in the boiling sun and newly planted trees shed their leaves in July, or there was cold and rain with snowfall on thousands of hectares of grain fields in Siberia.

In one such year I was interviewed by Danish television. A well-informed journalist took out newspaper and magazine clippings and asked me to comment on the underlined passages reporting on low harvests, milk yields and animal weight gains in the Soviet Union and the fabulous efficiency of French and Belgian farms. There was also a passage about Russia which once exported grain to the whole world."

Having read the clippings, I put a question which puzzled the Danish journalist.

"What, in your opinion, is the temperature range in our country?"

"What does that have to do with the Food Programme?" he demanded. "I am thinking about the management system."

"And I want to draw your attention to farming conditions," I replied. "It is now 23 degrees above zero in Turkmenia and 40 degrees below in Yakutia."

"The United States has Alaska as well as California, and this means that the temperature range there is no less," the journalist said.

I had to explain to the Danish guest what we ourselves fail to think about. Over a third of our territory is covered by the Arctic and sparsely forested tundra. Nearly half of the territory is permafrost. On three quarters of our territory, temperatures fall in winter to 40 degrees below zero, while there are 20-degree frosts even in subtropical regions.

Russia did once export grain abroad, but not to the whole world. Grain export never exceeded 12 million tons, because the peasants seldom had enough grain to keep them till the next harvest. Shortly before the first world war, the Russian Ministry of the Interior admitted that "death from hunger is annually a serious risk for a large number of Russian peasants."

Another thing is also true. We live on the same land and have to manage it properly. In the United States, the average yield of wheat per hectare is 2.7 tons, and in our country it is only 1.9 tons. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union now brings in 210 million tons a year, and there are plans to raise the annual grain harvest to 250 or even 255 million tons.

Once the country reaches this level, the vexatious purchase of grain abroad can be discontinued. This is not merely a wish but a sober calculation based on yield increases owing to the wide use of intensive technologies. There is one further hope. A durum and strong variety of wheat is grown only in a dry climate with plenty of sunshine.

Spring was good this year. There was plenty of snow in the fields, and it thawed slowly. Today one hears fewer calls to "win the battle in the peaceful fields," "raise quality and complete field work faster," and "achieve success in the teeth of the whims of nature." It was not on being instructed to do so by district and regional administrative centres that the farmers began to prepare seeds, adjust machines and sow the fields to crops. Though belatedly, the farmers, who only recently worked in accordance with instructions, are becoming masters of their fields and future. And this is radically changing the state of affairs in the countryside.

The family farm works

Writing these lines, I recalled a passage from Sergei Zalygin's "On the Irtysh River," a story about the early years of collective farming.

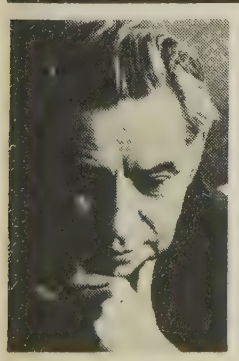
"Please explain to me, Yagodka Fofan. I get up in the morning, eat cabbage soup and make for the collective-farm office. I ask you: 'What am I to do, boss?' You think a little and say: 'Nechai, take two sledges and go to the Tatar island, on the far bank of the Irtysh, to make hay there.' So I harness horses to two sledges, take a seat in the front and go to make hay. Next day I ask you again: 'Yagodka Fofan, what am I supposed to do today?'

"'Well,' Fofan replies. 'You work for the farm, and I also work for the farm. And so the farm works for both of us. What's so bad about that?'

"'Am I a peasant after that?' Nechai asked. 'Last night I thought about how I'd put my mare in harness, drive to the smithy and ask the smith to give me a few nails, while my mare'd neigh near the smithy and piss on the road on the outskirts of the village and I'd stack hay with a fork on the sledge. I have planned my work for every day, and that is my way of life. As things are now, you'll give orders, and I shall have to obey them. In a year or two you'll become a chief of some kind and get into the habit of giving orders, whereas I'll be like a piglet with a fork on its neck, allowing it to walk only as permitted. But people are not pigs. You can't drive them along one path, they are all different.'"

A year ago Nikolai Shaposhnikov, a machine operator at the Mankovsky cattle-breeding farm in the Krasny District of Smolensk Region, went to the farm's director I. Salygin and said that he and his wife had decided to grow 55-60 tons of fodder beet per hectare. He asked the director to allot 40 hectares of land to them and regard their family as a team. "The whole village is working hard on this land, but has been unable to harvest more than 10 tons per hectare," Nikolai Shaposhnikov said.

There was a considerable risk, of course. The farm might be left without fodder beet and the Shaposhnikov family without earnings. But everything came right in the end. The agronomist, who was sceptical of the family contract, allotted land by eye. It turned out after measurement that the Shaposhnikovs had been given a plot of 32 hectares, and they harvested 43 tons of fodder beet per hectare. They fell short of their target, but it was a record for the cattle-breeding farm. Moreover, their expenses came to only a sixth of the average figure on the farm. The harvest was brought in with the help of Shaposhnikov's brother Valery



Anatoly Ivashchenko is a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and a TV commentator on political affairs.

and his wife. The four people coped with the work without outside assistance.

In the spring of this year, the Shaposhnikov brothers also worked with their wives. The farm allotted them 60 hectares, and they leased a neglected pigsty, where 300 pigs had been kept. The Shaposhnikovs have taken on 500 pigs for fattening and decided to reduce the price of their pork by at least 50 per cent. Last year Nikolai Shaposhnikov's monthly earnings rose to 700 rubles. Now that they have taken on pigs for fattening... But, as the saying goes, don't count your chickens before they're hatched.

Decades separate the characters in Zalygin's story and the rebirth of the farmer in our days, as can be seen from the example of Nikolai Shaposhnikov. It seems that we have not started too late, have not missed the point beyond which it would be pointless to remove the "fork" from the neck.

An excursus into the past

Not long ago, the famous chairman of a no less famous collective farm told me that, together with the capitalists, White Guards and landowners, the revolution wiped out the kulaks who had been fighting against the Soviets. One also often hears that before 1929, until the mass collectivization of agriculture began, the countryside was thriving, and it was but one step away from abundance.

I shall try to make things clear. The revolution did give land to the peasants, and the countryside was developing rapidly. But let us turn to unbiassed statistics if we want to evaluate the overall situation in the countryside at the crossroads of history, and understand the sources of Lenin's cooperation plan.

Between 1922 and 1925, the output of grain, meat and milk increased by a third and that of sugar beet fivefold. It will be recalled, however, that the point of departure was close to zero. 1922 was a hungry year. The peasants had just returned home from the Civil War and set about rebuilding their ruined households. By 1925, the countryside had scarcely managed to reach the prewar level.

In 1925, grain output made up 72.4 million tons, and the next year it jumped to nearly 77 million. In 1927 the figure dropped back to 72 million. A negligible increase was recorded in 1928, but the following year grain output fell below 72 million tons.

More statistics will help explain this erratic growth. In 1927 there were 25 million peasant households in the Soviet Union. I repeat, they received land. However, even ten years after the October revolution, 28.3 per cent of households in the Russian Federation had no draught animals, 31.5 per cent had no tilling implements, and 18.8 per cent, or almost one in five, had no cow.

Only four per cent of households kept three to four horses each and possessed a third of the machines then in short supply. The poor peasants without horses had either to lease their plots to rich peasants or hire draught animals and ploughs from them. They did so, and even went to work as labourers. This fact cannot be ignored.

There were kulaks and horseless peasants, and the spectre of famine still did not recede. Considering ways of building socialism in the Russian countryside, Lenin could not fail to take this situation into account. What way of "transition to a better system" seemed most reasonable to him? He saw it in cooperation, regarding cooperatives as a form "of transition to the new system by means that are the simplest, easiest and most acceptable to the peasant."

In the winter of 1923 Lenin dictated his last articles, including the well-known article "On cooperation." Reflecting on it, Lenin turned to "The basic ideas and forms of peasant cooperation," a work by the young economist Alexander Chayanov, who regarded the family work undertaking as the principal form of cooperation.

It was from this form that cooperation had begun to develop in the Russian countryside in the 1870s. By 1917 there were over 16,000 credit and savings associations, as well as 3,000 milk and 6,000 agricultural associations in Russia. Such large cooperative associations as the Moscow People's Bank, the Siberian Union of Butter Manufacturers and the Central Flax Growers' Association concluded deals on the world market.

After the Civil War, the cooperative movement developed even more rapidly. The year 1923 saw the formation of unions and centres dealing in flax, potato, fruit and wines, tobacco and grain. They united millions of peasant households which used machines, took credits, and processed and sold milk, flax, potato and poultry on a share basis. The idea of organizing communes for the joint cultivation of land won increasing support.

A cooperator in those years was not a shopkeeper. He worked in the fields or in a small producers' association, on a building site or in industry. Lenin imagined the future socialist society as a society of civilized cooperators.

But he immediately warned:

You can't build socialism by decrees

"It would be the greatest folly to try to introduce socialized farming by decree." This task should be tackled by "patiently advancing towards the new socialist construction – advancing by a series of gradual measures, by awakening the working peasants, and forging ahead only in step with that awakening." And further: *"Here coercion would ruin the whole cause.* Prolonged educational work is required... The aim is not to expropriate the middle peasant but to bear in mind the specific conditions in which the peasant lives, to learn from him methods of transition to a better system, *and not to dare give orders!"*

Lenin's cooperation plan has never been implemented. Stalin's plan for collectivization of agriculture was carried out. It was a brutal, violent and, for many people, tragic plan. Kulaks were eliminated as a class. But other peasants suffered too.

As many as 115,231 kulak families were exiled in 1930 and 265,795 in 1931. But these statistics are far from complete. No data are available for other years. There is no information either about the middle peasants subjected to repression. It is clear that the dispossession of the kulaks did not strike at this exploiter class alone. Thrifty and hard-working peasants full of initiative, that is, peasants needed above all for agriculture, were also victims of enforced collectivization.

Peasants with initiative did not fit into the system of administration by mere injunction. The chairmen of collective farms organized in the early years of collectivization were constantly ordered to send peasants to timber logging, unload railway cars, and to work in mines and factories and on building sites.

When the war started, the peasants went to fight on the front line or as partisans in the enemy's rear. The war lasted four years. In any village, in front of the collective-farm office, one can today see stelae with the names of peasants who fell in action during the war. The memorial lists contain the names of 300-400 people, more than the number of able-bodied peasants who survived.

Postwar dislocation, virgin land development, new construction projects, the conversion of collective farms into state farms by decrees from above, the razing of villages with no prospects, the fields and meadows overgrown with shrubs in the Pskov, Vologda and Smolensk regions... Socialism is, indeed, a powerful system to have withstood such a strain.

Hopes and apprehensions

I have made these digressions on the eve of the 19th Party conference with the sole aim of stressing the great importance of restoring Leninist principles, the

Leninist concept of socialism and cooperation in a socialist society. Today we are witnessing this process and participating in it.

There seems to be no likelihood of a repetition of distortions and crude pressure. New times and new hopes. There is also a foundation to rely on. The drafts of new rules for agricultural artels and of a new law on cooperatives open up broad vistas for self-management and initiative. However, mistrust, apprehension and hostility, open or concealed, are sometimes displayed towards the reforms.

For instance, there are few Party members in the newly established cooperatives, as they are afraid of looking like entrepreneurs. An agronomist or the chairman of a cooperative whose salary and bonuses are today being transferred to his current account in a savings bank does not risk building a house, not to mention a dacha.

Has any of the district Party committees invited an experienced specialist entering retirement to organize a cooperative that would give an example of how to trade and run a business, as Lenin advised?

I don't know of any instances of this kind. There is much talk about cooperatives. But so far only 14,000 non-agricultural cooperatives have been established. Ten to fifteen people are employed in each of them on average. They produce goods and render services worth 350 million rubles a year. A drop in the ocean! However, there are people at various levels who like to calculate how much others earn.

The principle of "keeping them down" when something new is introduced seems to have become deeply rooted in the minds of bureaucrats. This explains why a law on unearned incomes was enacted before individual enterprise could develop. The cooperators are only beginning to make profits. Nevertheless, the Finance Ministry has already put "forks on their necks" by establishing a new procedure for assessing income tax. Can collective and state farmers working on a profit-and-loss basis understand why the prices of combines, fertilizers and gas have doubled or even trebled? It was agreed, I think, that a preliminary discussion of the price reform would be held throughout the country. Or will the instructions issued by various departments kill the best intentions?

It has repeatedly happened that administrative rule has defied the law and will of the party. "Past experience, especially the experience of recent years, has fully confirmed Lenin's cooperation plan, under which socialist industry will lead small peasant households to socialism through cooperatives," says a resolution passed by the 15th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which vigorously opposed any administrative measures or coercion in relation to peasants.

But here is only one figure. Within six months in 1929 and 1930 Stalin and Kalinin received 90,000 letters complaining about oppression and arbitrary rule. In his reply to the students of the Yakov Sverdlov Communist University on February 10, 1930, Stalin nevertheless urged them "to intensify agricultural collectivization in districts not yet fully collectivized as a measure against the self-elimination of kulak households" and the "squandering" of their property.

As for the above-mentioned Alexander Chayanov, he was declared "an enemy of the people" in 1930. In 1937 he was tried again and executed.

Great hopes and prospects are opening up today, though with one important IF – if all the plans are implemented, if the idea is backed by vigorous organizational work, if good laws are buttressed by equally good decrees and instructions, if those who grow grain and consume it, or, in broader terms, the producer and the consumer, are not separated by the enormous bureaucratic apparatus which issues orders and distributes everything, but is responsible for nothing. Many attempts have been made to reduce the administrative apparatus. But they all produced the effect of a shot that merely frightened a flock of crows away. In a minute or two they descend again on the same trees.

In the Novomoskovsk District of the Tula Region, 518 officials have been made redundant as a result of organizing a single agro-industrial association of cooperatives. Things have improved, and there are plans to extend this experience to the whole of the Tula Region. This measure will release more than 24,000 officials of various ranks.

We have for a long time believed that instructions issued from above are carried out by authorized local representatives, while the peasants can be tied to the fields by the construction of urban-style housing and clubs. However, the peasant did not want to live in five-storey apartment blocks and, moreover, with "forks" hindering his work. He wants to be master both of the field he tills and his kitchen garden.

We are pinning our hopes on these changes, on the fact that the peasants are becoming masters of their fields.

It is an encouraging process, of course. Many of my friends and acquaintances in collective and state farms hope that the 19th Party conference will make the process of establishing the peasant as master of the land the central point of the Party's agricultural policy in the next few years, because, unfortunately, many people still have wrong notions about this policy.

Replying to a questionnaire from Literaturnaya Gazeta, I gave an account of my visit to the Veshenskaya Village in the Don River area. Under an oak on a hill, where guests were usually welcomed in the past, I ventured to ask the first secretary of the local district Party committee how it had happened that only one, and moreover a fishing, cooperative had survived in the area where Mikhail Sholokhov wrote his famous novel "Virgin soil upturned." The question spoiled our meeting. The first secretary angrily asked me if I had come to revise their agricultural policy.

But I simply wanted to understand how such a thing had happened. For only if people understand the past can they transform the present and know how to advance in the future.

Alexander Chayanov was fully rehabilitated in 1987, thanks to the efforts of the All-Union V. Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences and its president Alexander Nikonov.

The background to a rift

The conversation on Albania between Nina Smirnova, D.Sc. (Hist.), and our correspondent (New Times No. 2) brought many letters from our Soviet and foreign readers asking us to elaborate on the subject. Today the New Times correspondent continues his discussion with ***NINA SMIRNOVA.***

New Times. Most letters to the editors inquire about the reasons for the severance of Soviet-Albanian relations. Some offer their own explanations as to why this happened, and conjectures as to who is to blame. One reader believes the cause of the break-off to be "banal" – the rejection by the Albanian leadership of the denunciation of the Stalin personality cult at the 20th CPSU Congress. The reader suggests, in good faith if rather naively, that the Albanian leaders should "change their attitude to Stalin and take a new look at Lenin."

Nina Smirnova. This is a sound suggestion. I would say one can only benefit from rereading Lenin. Both here and in other socialist countries the process is now under way of assimilating Lenin's theoretical legacy in full and applying it creatively to the complex present-day situation. I think this process is at work in Albania, too, but at a slower rate. In this connection, one of our political observer's recent pronouncement to the effect that Albania is clinging to the kind of socialism we had in the thirties appears disputable, if not erroneous, and tactless in any case.

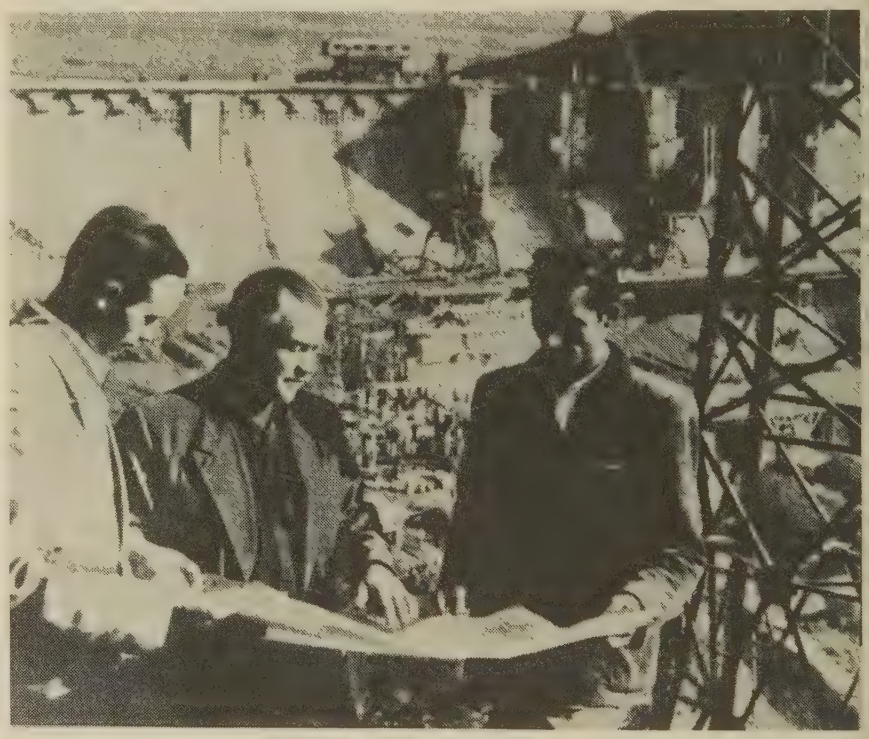
A reappraisal of Stalin's interpretation of Marxist-Leninist teaching is inevitable in Albania too. There is no denying, though, that for a number of historical reasons the administrative command method of management has become more firmly estabished there than in other European socialist countries. The process of perestroika in those countries involves considerable difficulties, as we know, so what can one expect in the case of Albania?

N.T. The answer to the question of what caused the rift between Albania and the U.S.S.R. could be suggested by a look at the developments that preceded it...

N.S. I must say, to begin with, that the ruling parties in socialist countries may well disagree on certain political issues, which is only natural. However, differences as such do not necessarily lead to conflicts. The dialectics of these countries' development and the diversity of the different forms of socialism presuppose diverse approaches to the same problems. On the other hand, unity presupposes coordinating various interests and taking them into consideration in order to attain common goals.

For instance, the Albanian leadership approved – unconditionally in words but in fact with strong reservations – the measures taken by the CPSU to deal with the Stalin personality cult. This "unqualified approval" was recorded in the resolutions of a number of plenums of the Albanian Party of Labour, and at its Third Congress in May-June 1956.

In short, differences already existed but did not manifest themselves in the routine practice of our political relations. The same applies to bilateral Soviet-Albanian economic cooperation: although the results were not quite to mutual satisfaction, whatever problems arose were constructively resolved throughout the postwar period.



A hydroelectric power station being built on the Mat River, Albania, with Soviet assistance when the two countries were still in close cooperation.

In the late sixties, the international communist and working class movement became divided on a number of issues; by siding with the then Chinese leaders, the Albanian Party of Labour found itself in opposition to other Communist parties. Before the June 1960 Bucharest Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, however, the APL did not voice openly its disagreement with the position of the CPSU. In the autumn of the same year, Albanian representatives at the U.N. refused to sign Bulgaria's proposals for regional disarmament in the Balkans, put forward on behalf of all the socialist countries, and Poland's draft resolution urging that no military bases be set up

on other countries' territories. The CPSU Central Committee's offers to meet with Albanian leaders with a view to ascertaining the gist of the differences and settling all the disputable issues through exchanges of views and mutual consultations were declined.

N.T. What stand did the Albanian delegation take at the conference of 81 Communist parties held in Moscow in November 1960?

N.S. At the conference, Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the APL Central Committee, elaborated in considerable detail on the Albanian position with regard to the peaceful coexistence of states with differing social systems, the diversity of forms of transition to socialism, and the criticism of the Stalin personality cult. The report revealed differences between the Albanian side's views and those of most other delegations. In his report Enver Hoxha dwelt on Soviet-Albanian economic relations in an extremely contentious manner. Although the discussion of the report was heated, a reconciliation of different viewpoints was achieved, as evidenced by the fact that the Albanian delegation signed the Statement and the Appeal to the Peoples of the World adopted by the conference. This acceptance of the majority view was purely formal, however. There was no longer any unity.

N.T. Although the fact of ideological differences was not made public at the time (as a look through the papers for those years will show), it remains true, does it not, that these differences came to have a substantial effect on the sphere of interstate relations?

N.S. That's right. Economic cooperation began to decline, Soviet experts were recalled and previously coordinated credits and deliveries were delayed. Each side accused the other of hindering the normal functioning of their respective diplomatic missions. On December 9-10, 1961, the two countries' foreign ministries exchanged strongly-worded notes. As a result, the Soviet government decided to recall the entire personnel of the Soviet embassy in Tirana and demanded that all the Albanian embassy staff leave Moscow. For a short while, two or three technicians stayed on in the abandoned embassy buildings, but they were eventually recalled as well. The plaques on the buildings were changed.

N.T. The recall of the embassy staffs signified the virtual severing of Soviet-Albanian relations. Was that inevitable under the circumstances, in your opinion?

N.S. I don't think so. To my mind, it was an over-reaction on our part to the stand taken by the Albanian leadership. In response to the Albanian side's fanning of ideological differences, we broke off diplomatic relations.

Reflecting on the development of cooperation between socialist countries, Mikhail Gorbachev writes as follows in his book "Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World": "There have been serious setbacks... The severance of friendly relations between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and Yugoslavia, the People's Republic of China and Albania, on the other, was especially unfortunate."

As the years went by, the rift in Soviet-Albanian relations continued to widen owing to new complications. Overcoming them and restoring the edifice of our relations is no easy matter.

Some may not relish the prospect of building this edifice anew, brick by brick. The restoration of friendship between our two nations is possible given a truthful and honest interpretation of the past and, of course, a mutual desire for rapprochement.

N.T. Some of our readers wonder why we should "curry favour with the Albanians" and "humiliate ourselves" by offering to restore relations while they continue to condemn our leadership's policy.

N.S. The statements which appear in our press as to the desirability of and need for the restoration of Soviet-Albanian relations reflect the preparedness of the Soviet leadership to normalize our relations with Albania in the interests of both nations. Far from detracting from the dignity of our state, this enhances its prestige.

Today certain ill-wishers concentrate exclusively on the intractability of the Albanian side. For myself, I discern certain changes in its position, albeit slight ones. This is indicated, for instance, by the fact that the Albanian press now gives much less space to criticisms levelled against the U.S.S.R., and by a shift of emphasis in these criticisms.

We certainly do not turn a blind eye to certain biassed and unfriendly publications which continue to appear in the Albanian press. Under the present circumstances, however, the "tit-for-tat" principle is not the best one to go by if one wants normal relations.

N.T. I agree with you that Albania's attitude to our country and our actions in the international arena has not so far undergone substantial changes. Nevertheless, there have appeared encouraging new tendencies in its foreign policy. For instance, it took part in the recent Belgrade meeting of the Balkan countries' foreign ministers.

N.S. This is true, although Reis Malile, the Albanian Foreign Minister, rejected outright speculations by foreign papers to the effect that Albanian foreign policy had shown new features, as evidenced by its emergence in the international arena. "It is the others who are changing, not us," he said.

Nevertheless, I regard Albania's participation in the Belgrade meeting as being significant in itself. Previously Albania stayed away from such forums.

Promoting relations with the neighbouring Balkan states had always been regarded by the leadership of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania as a priority foreign policy objective. Today, Albania seeks to play an increasingly active part in the region by expanding its bilateral contacts with its neighbours, on the one hand, and joining in multilateral cooperation in various fields, on the other. This tendency manifested itself, I think, in Albania's participation in the Belgrade meeting of the Balkan countries' foreign ministers.

Speaking in the Yugoslav capital, Reis Malile backed the idea of making the Balkans a zone free of nuclear and chemical weapons and supported the withdrawal of foreign troops from the peninsula and the closing down of military bases there.

Outside the Belgrade forum, Reis Malile had constructive talks with Budimir Lončar, the Yugoslav Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs, which certainly contributed towards greater understanding between the two countries.

"We are certain," Ramiz Alia, the Albanian leader, wrote in his message to the participants in the Belgrade meeting, "that the Balkan countries have enough good will and wisdom to overcome negative factors and old prejudices and to march forward along the road of international friendship..." This idea merits attention, I am sure...

The realities of the modern world demand that political wisdom and common sense prevail over emotion in dealing with complex – and sometimes even intricate – problems. It's time to give up old prejudices, stereotypes and dogmas. And this does not apply to Balkan cooperation alone.

Interviewer

GENNADY SYSOYEV

Photo from the New Albania magazine, 1958

Moon Jam: that was our protest

...A rhythmic "synthetic" foundation, a fine male voice, an original and unusual use of the contrabass, the saxophone, the clarinet, and video effects – all that is part of the arsenal of the Danish group Moon Jam. To that one should add the songs – lovely melodies (as have all pop songs incidentally) about people living far from their countries, about racial discrimination, and the danger that threatens us all if the arms race spreads into space.

The group from Copenhagen was formed only a short while ago – last December. It has performed at the nuclear testing site in Nevada, toured the Korean People's Democratic Republic, and on its way home stopped over in Moscow to give a couple of concerts.

Each musical group should know what it wants, said Moon Jam's leader and soloist Morten Kaersaa. It should have its own individual outlook, its own way of interpreting things.

How did the idea of performing in Nevada arise?

Back in the fifties our parents organized the first "peace train." Nevada is our contribution today to the movement for peaceful coexistence. The American performances were conducted jointly with Next Stop, a peace organization seeking to involve the younger generation. My brother Rasmus Kaersaa, the bass guitarist in the group, has strong links with Next Stop, and when he learned that we were planning a political performance of this kind, he asked me to write a good song for him. "Ticket to Peace" was a hit in Denmark. In a matter of days, with the help of the recording company Replay we produced an English and a Danish version, and made video-clips and a mini-record. The Americans liked "Ticket to Peace." We sang it a mere fifty metres from the spot where only the day before an underground nuclear test had been carried out. Some people might ask: "What did you achieve by doing that?" I would reply: "That was our protest, a symbolic protest, but we'll feel we have achieved something if only one person joins the movement to save the world as a result. Incidentally, next year a series of concerts sponsored by Next Stop are planned in Moscow together with Soviet youth organizations. We hope our performance in Russia will not be our last."

This is the first time you have been to the Soviet Union. What are your impressions?

We can feel your perestroika tangibly. It's a marvellous undertaking... As for your musical life, I'm glad you're going in for rock. But a great deal remains to be done: recordings of new groups have to be issued, and international contacts have to be arranged... We liked Muscovites. I came with my wife and our six-month-old son Emil. (Remember one of Astrid Lindgren's stories is about a naughty baby?) Well, during our performance people kept on coming up to Emil and presenting him with toys. I noticed that in general the attitude to children is very loving... I shall always remember the Russian custom of greeting people with bread and salt – that is how we were welcomed at the airport. Brown bread in general is the best bread of all... We visited the rock laboratory, the recreation centre "At the Fountain" and hope our friendship with Soviet musicians will continue.

You've just completed a tour of North Korea...

It was an extremely interesting and packed tour. We played in unusually exotic conditions. In effect we helped them discover European rock. We had to sing all our songs in Korean, and we also sang their national anthem. Despite our pronunciation, our concerts went down well. We were received in Pyongyang by Kim Il Sung, had a photograph taken together and recorded our new song "Journey in Korea. A fantasy" which we included in our Moscow programme.

You play pop music with elements of soul and fusion. Who is your idol in the music world?

In my youth it was Jimmy Hendricks with his undying optimism, and now it is Phil Collins and Peter Gabriel.

What will you do on your return to Copenhagen?

A lot of hard work awaits us. We shall spend more than two months recording the new disc "Moon Jam in Russia" and then we want to open a sort of cabaret that will tell people about our tour of North Korea and our visit to Moscow. We are fired with enthusiasm by these trips and full of new plans.

What do you dream of?

The first and most important dream is of peace, that international tension will disappear and all people have the chance to be themselves. And of course that Moon Jam should perfect its art.

If you were in my shoes, Morten, what question would you put?

That's hard to answer, smiled Morten Kaersaa. I would ask when a new hit song will appear?

So, when?

That's what I often ask myself. I'm waiting!

NATALYA BEKETOVA

Photo by Fyodor Simmul

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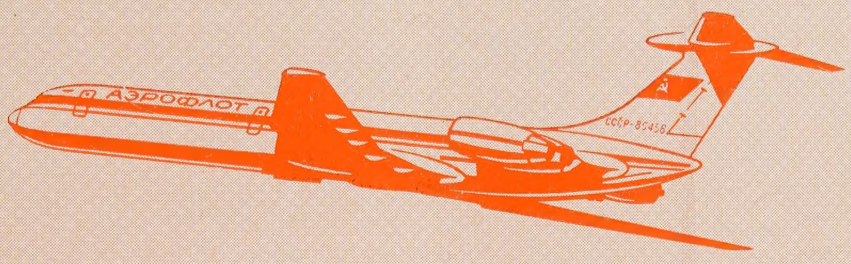

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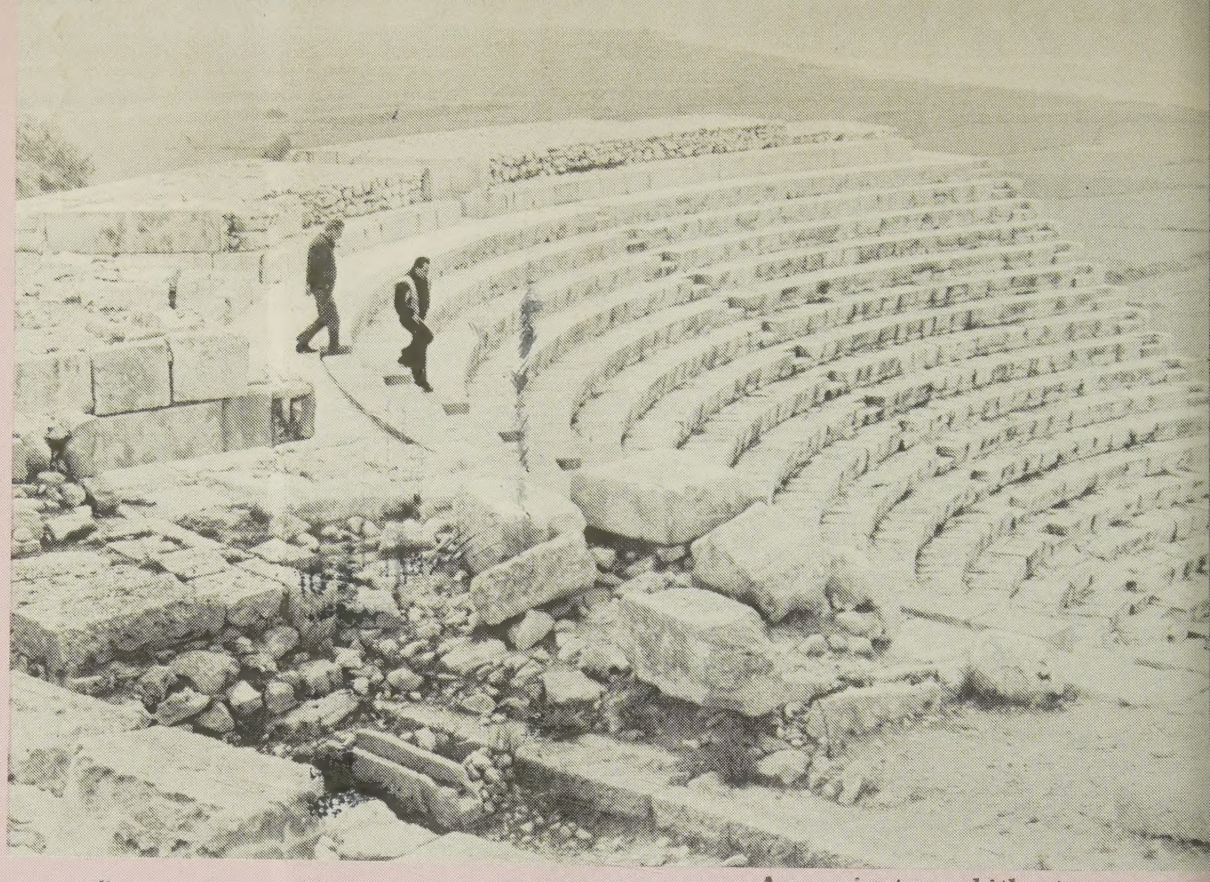
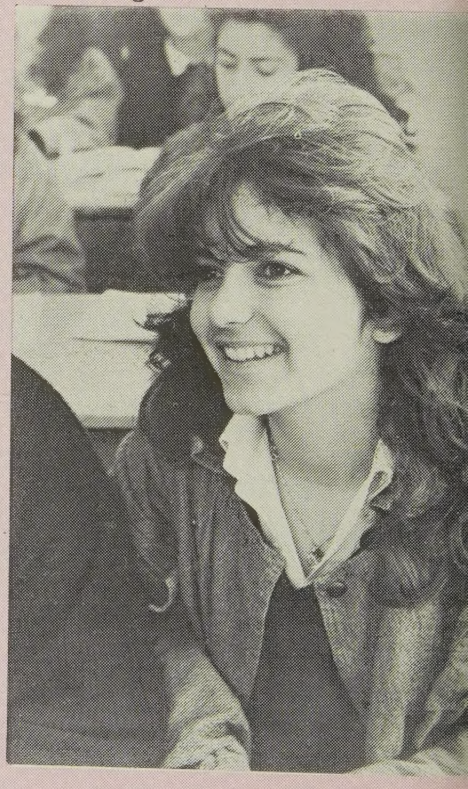


An ancient amphitheater.

A peasant house
in the Skarinou village.

A schoolgirl.



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